United Nations A/S-24/PV.1

General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

1st meeting
Monday, 26 June 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Temporary President, the Chairman of the delegation of Namibia

The Temporary President: I declare open the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/S-24/6)

The Temporary President: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-24/6, which contains a letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Secretary-General, in which he informs the Assembly that 35 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee, consisting of nine members.

In accordance with precedents, and as recommended by the Preparatory Committee for the

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twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Credentials Committee of the twenty-fourth special session should have the same membership as that of the fifty-fourth regular session of the Assembly, namely, Austria, Bolivia, China, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: In this connection, may I invite the attention of the members of the Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General, dated 13 March 2000, in which it was stated that credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would urge all members to submit the credentials of their representatives to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President

The Temporary President: The Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session recommends that the twenty-fourth special session should take place under the presidency of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth regular session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia.

I take it that the Assembly wishes to elect Mr. Gurirab President of the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab and invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Gurirab took the Chair.

Statement by Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session

The President: I am delighted to welcome you all to the twenty-fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly.

First of all, I wish to thank my Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Hage G. Geingob of the Republic of Namibia, for presiding over the opening of this meeting, prior to my election to this position. I am most grateful, and pledge to superintend the session to a successful conclusion.

During the pre-session phase we were honoured with the gracious presence of two eminent world leaders: Mr. Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Confederation, and Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark. We are exceedingly delighted by their presence, and in particular by the thoughtful statements they delivered before the start of this crucial special session.

We recall with appreciation the generous hospitality and the best efforts made by the Government and the people of Denmark towards the final and wonderful outcome of the 1995 Copenhagen Summit.

In the same vein, our heartfelt thanks go to the Government and the people of the Swiss Confederation, and in particular to its President, for the kind invitation extended for the holding of the special session in Geneva. It is worth emphasizing that a significant number of delegations present here have received generous assistance from the Swiss Government to be able to attend the conference. On behalf of everybody, we place on record our gratitude and happiness for that goodwill.

Today, 26 June, we commemorate two important days: the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. I have issued messages to mark the two occasions.

Geneva has always been, and continues to be, an ideal conference venue. This time, in the new millennium, we have come to this historic and beautiful city to confront one of the most urgent challenges of our time. It is the challenge of putting the needs of the people at the centre of the global agenda of peace, development and democracy. We are here to agree on real solutions to the acute problems of real people.

In searching for such solutions, we must review the past. But, more importantly, we must agree on a

future plan of action that brings together Governments, business, parliaments, non-governmental organizations and civil society into a constructive partnership for joint action. At this stage, political will, resources and sustained efforts are required to shift economic globalization onto a new course that will focus that partnership on poverty eradication, full employment and shared prosperity. In this way, all the world's people will be able to share a stake in the future with optimism.

Today, the main challenge facing humankind is represented by the awesome force of globalization. It is said that millions in the world welcome globalization, while millions fear it. What the world actually needs is globalization with a head, a heart and a human face. Heads of State or Government and numerous representatives from across the world who attended the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen anticipated the crisis of globalization and put great emphasis on fairness and social justice on the balance sheet of values and conscience, alongside profit, loss and gross domestic product. They called for balance between the power of the market forces that produce technology, knowledge and prosperity, and the crippling reality that the distribution of benefits was increasingly and dangerously skewed.

We carry this heavy load as we come here to forge a common understanding in order to turn the situation around for the better. The future must become optimistic and rewarding for all of humankind. Right now, it is very doubtful for millions of earthlings, especially those in the developing countries. It is really not surprising that there is a storm over globalization. In recent months, from Seattle to Washington, D.C., and Davos, actions have spoken louder than words. We all witnessed those confrontations, and they might have been just a warning shot fired across the bow.

The signatories at Copenhagen in 1995 framed a broad strategy covering national, regional and international action to end marginalization and injustice. They promised to establish time-bound targets to cut poverty, promote greater equality between women and men, achieve full employment and establish universal access to education and primary health care. World leaders vowed to accelerate the advancement of the least developed countries and to increase resources for official development assistance. Since then, some noticeable national efforts and programmes have been launched. But let us be honest: we all know that, overall, many developing countries have continued to fall behind. Economic insecurity breeds social insecurity, and the result is untold human misery.

Our task this week, and beyond Geneva, is to build upon the strong foundation of consensus that was reached in Copenhagen and to uphold the social commitment expressed there five years ago. To do that, we must marshal resources for social commitment commensurate with the needs of real people. By this, I mean not only development grants but also other critical areas of policy initiative: debt cancellation, productive investment, measures to discourage financial speculation and firm action to end the tariff and non-tariff barriers that still impose lopsided development on the least developed countries. All these steps should be taken in unison and on a sustained basis. Otherwise, what one hand might give in development assistance, the other hand will take away. In many cases, that has been happening all along.

The recent South Summit, held in Havana, Cuba, reiterated the importance of South-North economic and trade relations and urged the recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development meeting, as well as the forthcoming meeting of the Group of Eight and, particularly, the Millennium Summit to take seriously these recommendations and proposals. The recent meeting of the ministers of the Group of Fifteen, held in Cairo, Egypt, also echoed these calls and reiterated the same concerns.

The most frequently cited indication that social development is not yet secure on the international agenda is the decline in official development assistance that has continued since Copenhagen, where the goal of committing 0.7 per cent of gross national product was reaffirmed. Several European countries have met the targets they set for themselves, and a few other countries are moving in the same direction. At the same time, however, the failure of wealthy countries to keep that promise is hard to understand. It is a disappointing setback, and I can only hope for a change of heart in the future.

The burden of third world debt is, in fact, even more crushing than the absence of aid. For example, a number of African countries are forced to pay more for debt service than for education and health combined. On top of that, much of their debt was incurred by

undemocratic regimes that were encouraged and supported by certain industrialized countries. To add insult to injury, more aid and cooperation was extended in the past to those dictatorships than is being given to the democratizing and reforming Governments in Africa today. Although the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative was launched in 1996, only four or five of 33 applicants have qualified. Some leaders in industrialized countries often lament the burden that deficit spending will impose on their children. Why, then, has there been benign neglect in the face of the crushing mortgage being imposed on future generations in impoverished countries?

The private sector could do — in fact, it has done — more than the public sector to provide development resources in the form of investment and joint ventures. Unfortunately, only a fraction of this is long-term productive business partnership, and little of that goes to the developing countries that most need it. Much of this in recent years has been volatile, short-term capital flows.

For their part, the United Nations agencies and programmes, in partnership with Governments and non-governmental organizations, continue their most indispensable work in the field, saving lives and assisting reconstruction and development. We will be hearing from them later on.

If the alternative to aid is trade, it should follow that the prerequisite for trade is tariff reduction and strengthening of trade preferences. Most developing countries depend on commodities for more than half of their export revenues. Their primary economic sectors are agriculture and textiles, which are precisely the areas that many industrialized countries so doggedly protect. There would be no more effective way for the industrialized countries to demonstrate commitment to sustainable social development than to implement special and deferential treatment of the exports of developing countries. Surely, we can agree that it is neither fair nor helpful to pursue a form of economic liberalization that forces fledgling developing countries to open their markets while excluding the only services and goods they can offer for export.

New trade laws and debt cancellation initiatives have been adopted recently by key industrialized countries, and we welcome this step as a good thing and a way of moving things in the right direction. Granted, there are now two ways to go about this. Developing countries themselves must deepen their commitment to political, economic and legal reforms and accountable government. Otherwise, the incidence of marginalization will be enforced even more harshly, and the victims will be the poor and the most vulnerable sectors of society. There is really no point in our being arrogant or despondent when, in the case of Africa today, war, death and economic woes deny livelihood to millions of our people and denude them of human dignity.

On the other hand, those fortunate countries that benefited from early industrialization and are therefore today in an ideal position to profit immensely from globalization should acknowledge and assume the responsibilities towards the least fortunate that accompany their great fortune.

The special session in Geneva is a vital link in a chain extending from the eventful past and leading to the Millennium Summit in New York in September, as well as to the scheduled high-level event on financing for development in 2001. No doubt the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions must work more closely together on financing for development. Careful and inclusive preparations are needed to ensure the success of that high-level event next year.

Let me shift at this stage for a moment to another, related field of common interest: the multilateral treaty framework. Much of the social progress achieved over the past 50 years and more is underpinned by a comprehensive multilateral treaty formation. Many of the more than 500 multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General deal specifically with socio-economic issues. I join the Secretary-General in his urgent call on those States that have hitherto not signed or ratified many of these treaties to do so with all deliberate speed. In this connection, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative urging States which, while committed to these treaties, may lack the necessary resources to sign or ratify them to advise him of any difficulties they may have. To accomplish this, the Secretary-General has requested the United Nations system, including those in the field, to assist the States concerned to be able to fulfil their obligations pursuant to the Charter of our Organization in this vital field. The Millennium Summit will offer the best possible opportunity for world leaders to firmly anchor their collective commitment to the rule of law. Parliaments of the world should themselves be

robust catalysts and play an effective role in this noble endeavour.

In concluding, let me say a word about where we are coming from and about a way forward. A little over two weeks ago, some of us in this Hall were present in New York for the Assembly's twenty-third special session, on women's rights, empowerment and gender equality. It was obvious to anyone listening to the 207 statements made in the plenary or participating in the negotiations on the final outcome document on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that the issues addressed in respect of the 12 critical areas of concern set out in 1995 were closely linked and often identical to the social development issues that we are here to tackle.

At the Beijing + 5 special session we agreed on the need for policies and strategies to address the concerns of women in poverty, the economic empowerment of women and women's involvement and participation in all human issues. Are these not the same concerns we will be considering as we assess how well Governments have implemented the 12 commitments and the Programme of Action to reduce poverty and achieve full employment and the inclusion and participation of women and men in society, adopted at Copenhagen in 1995? Promoting sustainable social development will help eliminate barriers to equality, eradicate poverty and overcome the disparities, inequalities and injustices that exist in the world today, most especially for women.

Please, let us not forget the plight of children in the world. Their despair has now been further exacerbated by the breakdown of the family and by the horrors of organized crime and child soldiering. If these goals are achieved, we will at long last be able to say that a sea change is under way. I truly hope so. Now let us dive in.

I now call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: Thank you, Mr. President, for those most eloquent and perceptive remarks.

We must all agree that the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 was indeed ahead of its time. Events since then have confirmed a central insight, which I believe can be stated in two closely related propositions. First, economic growth, if it is to be broad-based and sustainable, requires investment in people, their health, their education and their security. Secondly, essential though it is, growth will not by itself guarantee that most people in a country have the chance to live lives of dignity and fulfilment. A healthy society is one that takes care of all its members and gives them a chance to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

No one must be discriminated against. No one must be obliged to conform to an official culture or denied the right to associate with others to defend their particular identity and interests.

In short, social and economic welfare are inseparable concepts. Without economic prosperity, no country can provide for all the social needs of its citizens. Nor can any country be called truly prosperous so long as many of its citizens are left to fend for themselves against ignorance, hardship and disease. Nor can any country achieve prosperity by subordinating all social concerns to the achievement of a few quantitative benchmarks. What matters in the last resort is the quality of life, a big part of which is the feeling that you belong freely to your society, and that it belongs to you as well.

These conclusions apply to rich and poor countries alike, but they are especially significant for the global debate on development. In that context, they have been advocated for years within the United Nations, but are now much more widely accepted by other multilateral organizations.

It is surely a sign of the times that this very afternoon I shall be launching a new report, "A Better World for All", which has been co-signed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and, of course, the United Nations. It is the first time ever that the four main international organizations concerned with development have come together and reviewed progress towards the internationally agreed goals for reducing extreme poverty and have articulated a common vision of the way forward.

Just ahead of us is the Millennium Summit, which will take place in New York this September. It will be the largest gathering of heads of State or Government the world has ever seen. If the spirit of Copenhagen

can be maintained in Geneva, I have every hope that it will be further strengthened in New York.

In the report which I have presented for consideration by the Summit, I put great emphasis on social objectives. I believe they should be seen not as adjuncts to the struggle against worldwide poverty, but as integral parts of that struggle. If social problems are to be tackled the world over, society as a whole will have to function properly; if not, society will not function properly, and poverty will not be defeated either.

Fifteen years from now, will there still be tens of millions of primary school-age children who are not attending school? Will tens of millions of young people of both genders still be searching unsuccessfully for work? Will small children and pregnant women still be dying every minute from malaria and other preventable diseases? Will young people still be contracting and spreading the HIV virus because they do not know how you catch it and how to avoid it? And will treatment for AIDS still be priced far beyond the means of those suffering from it in the developing countries? Will whole regions of the world, and large groups even in the richest societies, still be condemned to live on the margins of the global economy? Will most people throughout the developing world still be left out of the universe of mobile phones and the Internet, while the industrialized world, with a few enclaves in the South, rushes further and further ahead, using even newer technologies that none of us here has yet heard of? And will many societies still be polarized along lines of ethnicity, race or class, prone to outbursts of group hatred and even violence?

If the answer to any of those questions is yes, we shall not be able to claim convincingly that we are winning the battle against human misery, even if, as I firmly hope, we have succeeded in halving the proportion of people living on one dollar a day or less.

That brings me to the question of resources. You are absolutely right, Mr. President, to raise that issue, an issue which we shall address in its broadest dimensions next year at the planned global meeting on financing for development. It is only natural that the poor countries of the world, which have so few resources of their own, should look for help to the rich ones. Many of those rich countries have acute social problems of their own. But none of them can be indifferent to the social conditions in which so many people in the poor countries live. Such extreme squalour is an affront to our common humanity. We are all impoverished if the poor are denied opportunities to make a living. And it is within our power to extend these opportunities to all.

I have said it in my millennium report, and I say it again here: the rich countries have an indispensable role to play by further opening their markets, by providing deeper and faster debt relief and by giving more and better-focused development aid. But those changes are less likely to come, and will bring few real benefits even if they do come, unless the leaders and peoples of the developing countries show real determination to mobilize their own resources — above all, their own human resources — to deal with their own social problems. The case for making extra resources available through debt relief and increased development aid can be made compellingly when it is clear that those resources will indeed be used to provide social services which benefit the poor. But it is hard indeed to make that case when there is reason to think that extra resources may be used to purchase weapons or to raise the standards of living of an already privileged elite.

Similarly, more open markets can only benefit countries which are able to supply those markets at competitive prices with goods that people want to buy. That means countries, which by good governance and sound economic policies have created a propitious climate for investment, both domestic and foreign. Those countries which are racked by conflict, held back by unnecessary regulations or plundered by unaccountable officials will benefit little from economic assistance, whatever form it takes.

Let me conclude by saying how glad I am that this session is being held now. There could not be a better time to focus on the real social problems facing the human race and on the most effective ways of tackling them. I wish you a very serious and productive session. I look forward eagerly to your conclusions. And I hope that they, in turn, will influence the deliberations of the Millennium Summit in New York this September.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/S-24/2 and Add. 1 and 2 (Parts I-III))

The President: I should like to inform members that the report of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly is contained in document A/S-24/2 and Add.1 and Add.2 (Parts I-III).

I give the floor to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, Mr. Cristián Maquieira of Chile.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile), Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my duty to introduce the report of the Preparatory Committee, whose work, concluded last week, was the very foundation of the process we are now beginning at this special session of the General Assembly.

The Preparatory Committee had two substantive meetings and produced the foundation of the agreement that is to emerge from this special session. On the basis of the Copenhagen agreements, particularly the 10 commitments, the Preparatory Committee drew up a set of draft outcomes to be adopted by the General Assembly at this special session. These basically consist of a political declaration, a chapter on the review of the Copenhagen agreements and further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development. The major part of the first two texts – the political declaration and the review document – has been entirely negotiated; the latter has been agreed, though we must still present the definitive agreement later this week on further initiatives to complement the achievements of Copenhagen.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, I should like to thank the Bureau – Ambassadors Gorita, Richelle, Baali and Asadi – for their contribution, as well as the Secretariat. In the United Nations litany of opening one phase while concluding another, the Preparatory Committee's work has been very successful.

I should like express some personal hopes about our forthcoming work this week and for the United Nations as a whole. I have no doubt that, within and without this Hall, there are many people who have lost faith in the institutions governing the world's economy. To my mind, this loss of faith is due more than anything else to the fact that, in recent decades, we have continued to live in a very and increasingly unequal world, within countries as well as among them.

We representatives participating in this special session have a particular responsibility, because these are interesting times for the United Nations. In all candour and honesty, we must conclude that the United Nations is at a crossroads, because last year's well-known "Seattle challenge" is not a challenge to the Bretton Woods institutions alone; it is also a challenge to the United Nations to demonstrate its relevance once again and to recommit itself to its principles and objectives, which are, essentially, to represent the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves. There 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty and almost 2 billion more who are on the verge of it and who have no other hope than that offered by the various bodies of the United Nations.

I would say that the United Nations may not have the very positive tools available to other institutions, but it does have something that others lack: the legitimacy born of universal participation and the universal mandate it enjoys from the Charter. This is the only institution that enjoys a sufficiently broad mandate to succeed in integrating labour, social, economic development, the environment, social development and other issues. The United Nations is the only institution that can strike that balance. Thus, to a certain extent, all partial exercises end up and are resolved here.

In conclusion, the central issue of globalization that we have referred to so often lies not so much in its technological progress or benefits, which are well known to us all, but in its defects and in the phenomenon, very much alive today, of the total absence of objective rules for imposing order on globalization so as to exploit its advantages and minimize the damage it causes. It has been said on more than one occasion that globalization itself is going to determine its own rules, but we know that is not so, because the rules of globalization benefit those who profit from the process and not those who suffer its negative impact.

Consequently, it is very clear that there is a need to begin the process of establishing those rules. That

process begins here. To a certain extent, it began in Copenhagen in 1995 and continues this week. Much has been made of the convergence of economic and social issues, which perhaps should be the first rule and cornerstone of globalization issues. I believe that the goal we must fulfil in order to leave this session with a sense of pride and satisfaction is to integrate social norms with the essence of the doctrine of globalization. That, which sounds so very easy, actually represents a vast effort to achieve fairness and justice in distribution.

Moreover, this is not a North-South conference. This is not one of those conferences where a series of commitments are made to score points. The approach created in Copenhagen is one in which advantages and commitments are shared. Commitments that benefit the North are not going to work if they do not benefit the South as well. Thus, my hope for this session lies in recalling one of my favorite old rock-and-roll songs: You can't always get what you want, but it is absolutely essential that this special session give us what we need.

The President: The General Assembly is grateful to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and to those who participated in the Committee for their efforts to get this special session off to a good start.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Organization of the session

Draft decision I (A/S-24/2)

The President: Members are invited to turn to draft decision I, recommended by the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session in paragraph 42 of its report contained in document A/S-24/2.

Draft decision I is entitled "Organizational arrangements for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision I?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The President: On the basis of the decision just taken by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee, the following arrangements shall apply to the twenty-fourth special session:

The Vice-Presidents of the twenty-fourth special session shall be the same as those of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

The Vice-Presidents of the fifty-fourth regular session are the following Member States: Algeria, Bolivia, China, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, Grenada, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Monaco, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Seychelles, Tajikistan, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly decides to elect by acclamation those States Vice-Presidents of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

It was so decided.

The President: Regarding the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of the twenty-fourth special session, the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of the fifty-fourth regular session shall serve in the same capacity at the special session.

The Chairpersons of the Main Committees at the fifty-fourth regular session are the following: the First Committee, Mr. Raimundo González of Chile; of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Sotirios Zackheos of Cyprus; of the Second Committee, Mr. Roble Olhye of Djibouti; of the Third Committee, Mr. Vladimir Galuška of the Czech Republic; of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Penny Wensley of Australia; of the Sixth Committee, Mr. Phakiso Mochochoko of Lesotho.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly decides to elect by acclamation these representatives Chairpersons of the Main Committees at the twenty-fourth special session.

It was so decided.

The President: As concerns the Third Committee, the Chairman of the Third Committee has informed me that, in his absence, he has designated Ms. Mónica Martínez of Ecuador, Vice-Chairperson of the Third Committee, to act as Chairperson of that Committee for the duration of the special session.

In adopting the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee, the Assembly has established

an ad hoc committee of the whole, which will be designated as Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-Fourth Special Session.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee just adopted by the General Assembly, the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole will be a full member of the General Committee of the twenty-fourth special session.

Concerning the election of the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, the Preparatory Committee recommends that its Chairman, Mr. Cristián Maquieira of Chile, serve in the same capacity in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session to elect Mr. Cristián Maquieira Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate Mr. Cristián Maquieira on behalf of the General Assembly, and on my own behalf, and wish him well in the important and onerous responsibilities that he has just assumed.

The General Committee of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly has now been fully constituted.

On the basis of the decision just taken by the General Assembly, observers may make statements in the debate in the plenary.

States members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations that are not Members of the United Nations may participate in the work of the twenty-fourth special session in the capacity of observers.

Associate members of the regional commissions may participate in the special session, in the same observer capacity as held for their participation in the World Summit for Social Development.

Representatives of United Nations programmes and other entities in the United Nations system may make statements in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations may make statements in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole. Given the availability of time, a limited number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council may also make statements in the debate in plenary. In this regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that consultations are still ongoing regarding the list of selected non-governmental organizations. As soon as the list is ready, it will be presented to the Assembly for its approval.

In accordance with the decision just adopted by the General Assembly, there will be 10 plenary meetings over the five-day period, with two meetings per day: from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. In view of the large number of representatives already inscribed on the list of speakers for the debate in the plenary, I should like to inform members that I intend to start the plenary meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In this connection, I would like to assure the Assembly that I shall be in the Chair as usual, punctually, at the scheduled time. I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard.

With regard to the length of statements in the debate in plenary meeting, I should like to remind representatives that, on the basis of the decision just adopted by the Assembly, statements should not exceed seven minutes.

In connection with the time limits, a light system has been installed at the speakers' rostrum, which functions as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement; an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the seven minutes; and a red light will be activated when the seven-minute limit has elapsed. I should like to appeal to speakers in the debate in plenary meeting to cooperate in observing the time limits of their statements, so that all those inscribed on the list of speakers for a given meeting will be heard at that meeting.

I should now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of Palestine, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

Members will recall General Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998 and its annex, as well as a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/1002, which outlines the Secretary-General's understanding of the implementation of the modalities annexed to the resolution.

I should like to draw attention in particular to paragraph 6 of the annex to resolution 52/250, which reads as follows:

> "The right to make interventions, with a precursory explanation or the recall of relevant General Assembly resolutions being made only once by the President of the General Assembly at the start of each session of the Assembly."

Accordingly, for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the observer of Palestine will participate in the work of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, resolution 43/177 of 15 December 1988 and resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention by Palestine in this special session.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The provisional agenda of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly is contained in document A/S-24/1, which has been recommended for adoption by the Preparatory Committee of the twenty-fourth special session in draft decision II, in paragraph 42 of its report contained in document A/S-24/2. In order to expedite its work, the Assembly may wish to consider the provisional agenda directly in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it, then, that the Assembly wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/S-24/1?

It was so decided.

The President: Regarding the allocation of items, on the basis of the decision taken by the General Assembly, all the items on the agenda are to be considered directly in plenary meeting.

In addition, agenda item 8 has also been allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the twenty-fourth special session for consideration, on the understanding that the debate on item 8 shall take place in plenary meeting.

Agenda item 8

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: The Assembly will first hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Abderrahman El-Youssoufi, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. El-Youssoufi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to say how pleased I am to take part in this special session and to express the satisfaction of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco at seeing social issues at the forefront of policies on growth and development cooperation. Indeed, in March 1995, at Copenhagen, the States Members of the United Nations reached a global consensus aimed at eliminating poverty, promoting employment and ensuring social integration for the benefit of the poor people of the world. This consensus was crowned by a general Declaration and a Programme of Action based on the implementation of 10 commitments.

Firmly committed to placing its social policy within the framework of that general Declaration and basing its action on the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen, the Government of His Majesty the King, which I have the honour of leading, has placed at the centre of its preoccupations issues relating to democracy, human rights, human dignity, freedoms and principles of justice and equity, in the framework of a State based on the rule of law.

In this context, the Government has drawn up and put in place a social development strategy aimed at achieving the objectives sought by the Copenhagen Summit. Furthermore, in its determination to attain its objectives and to be in conformity with the 20/20 initiative, my country's Government is committed to increasing resources for the social sector, which grew from 38.6 per cent of the overall State budget in 1995 to 47 per cent for the current financial year.

These resources have gone towards supporting a social policy based on the extension of basic social services to the underprivileged, combating unemployment and social exclusion, reducing inequalities, reforming our system of social protection and the extension of solidarity mechanisms. In all these areas, the Moroccan Government has identified needs and objectives and has decided on an ambitious and realistic time-frame. Our programme for supplying potable water to the rural areas will enable us to reach a coverage rate of 80 per cent by 2010, to the benefit of 7.3 million people. The programme for general rural electrification will benefit 1.5 million families by 2010, while the national programme for rural trails will bring 6 million people out of isolation by 2004.

In the area of combating poverty, specific programmes have been initiated and institutions and appropriate financial mechanisms have been created, including the Mohammed V Foundation for solidarity, presided over by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Social Development Agency and the Hassan II Fund for Economic and Social Development.

As for the struggle against unemployment, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco has implemented a policy aimed at promoting productive, job-generating investments through the reform of our training and integration system, creation of the national agency for the promotion of employment and skills and the implementation of a self-employment programme for young graduates.

In the same context, we have developed a microcredit system and have initiated the reform of our national social security system. We have also committed ourselves to establish a system of unemployment compensation. Moreover, particular attention is being paid to the integration of women in development, and provisions for the aged, the disabled and children in difficulties are being set up.

This policy was conceived in the framework of dialogue and ongoing consultation between the State, the territorial communities, the private sector, trade unions, actors of civil society and regional and international organizations, in accordance with our will to make citizens' participation the basis of a shared and unified management of our social development strategy.

Despite the commitments made at Copenhagen, the reality of our planet is that large segments of the world population continue to live in dire conditions. In this connection, recent statistics emanating from the United Nations Development Programme show that 1.3 billion persons live in extreme poverty, and 550 million people suffer from malnutrition. This situation is aggravated in Africa by the devastating effects of pandemics, internal conflicts and the debt burden.

The same statistics attest to the fact that globalization has resulted in an improved standard of living and in the emergence of new investment and employment opportunities in other areas of the world. The appearance of renewed forms of protectionism, the emergence of major transnational networks of global markets, the lack of solidarity in dealing with the debt and the decrease in development aid are at the root of the unequal evolution that characterizes our world.

Because of this planet-wide social fracture, we must recall the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General that many countries experience globalization not as a factor of progress, but rather as a destructive force capable, like a hurricane, of destroying in a few moments lives, jobs and traditions in its path.

In this connection, I wish to reiterate the appeal I made at the South Summit of the Group of 77 at Havana in April 2000, regarding the urgency of acting to establish more equitable multilateral trade rules and to implement new modalities for financial and monetary regulation to prevent international economic and financial crises. Furthermore, converting debt into investment to the benefit of the medium-income countries of the South, debt alleviation or cancellation for the least developed countries, particularly those of Africa, and the mobilization of additional financial resources to support social programmes in these countries and to assist in the modernization of their economies should constitute in the future the essential pillars of new policies for development cooperation.

Regarding another matter, migrant workers should enjoy the protection guaranteed by national and international instruments. Moreover, host countries must ratify the treaties and conventions relating to the protection of workers and their family members.

Under these conditions the international community will be able to build the lasting foundations of a globalization based on solidarity and the controlled liberalization of economies.

Convinced of the fairness of such options, the Kingdom of Morocco, through its King, took the initiative during the Euro-African Summit at Cairo of cancelling the entire debt of the least developed African countries and of removing all customs barriers on products coming from these countries.

May the Geneva session allow the formulation of new strategies and the implementation of innovative initiatives to render the Copenhagen Summit objectives operational and to make the world consensus on social development into a tangible reality of the daily lives of the many poor sectors of our planet.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by giving warm thanks to the Government of the Swiss Confederation for the decisiveness and courage it has shown in hosting this special session of the General Assembly.

Following the Copenhagen Summit, held in 1995, the international community is meeting again in a special session under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider once again one of the major concerns that strongly affect balance in the world, namely, social development.

Indeed, the current situation is not very different from that of the past. Statistics in the past showed that poverty was advancing more rapidly than world population growth and that the possibilities for development of the most seriously affected countries were practically nil. The international community had to adopt effective mechanisms of cooperation to grapple with poverty, foster international solidarity and create remunerative jobs. These are the three objectives that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action enshrined as objectives for the third millennium, in order to speed up sustainable social development in the world.

However, we note that there has been little change in the world situation, which is facing an uncertain future. The richest countries are becoming richer, while the poorest are being reduced to misery. Unemployment is increasing through lack of investment in the poorest countries, and their gross national product is decreasing. The external debt burden has cancelled the possibilities of investment in the productive sectors, while the social sectors are getting hardly any attention whatsoever. The range of collateral problems is multiplying, as we witness mass migrations of people to urban centres and to more hospitable countries, the proliferation of diseases and increasing illiteracy rates, morbidity and mortality, struggles for survival of human groups, social insecurity and so forth.

Despite the efforts made by countries for the maintenance of peace, we deplore and condemn the provocative attitudes that give rise to fratricidal wars that annihilate populations and destroy the scant economic and social infrastructure of developing countries.

The evaluation that can be made of the post-1995 situation is, generally speaking, negative for countries that have not seen any increase in their national production. However, my country's experience is that in order to foster sustainable social development, we need not only peace and social stability, but also abundant economic resources and diverse sources of financing. This is not a task that could be undertaken by one State alone, especially if it is a low-income country that is lacking in productive infrastructure. We need the solidarity of the entire international community and the political will to cooperate, as recommended in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

My country has not had this solidarity, and I suppose that many needy countries have not had it either. Through the General Assembly, we ask the international community to turn its eyes again towards those countries that are in a state of turmoil. We should not condition assistance on political situations whose causes are unknown to us. In fact, assistance should be given precisely to those countries that are suffering from political turmoil in order to eliminate the root causes. No country wants to remain in poverty and underdevelopment, and no Government wants political instability. There is a lack of economic means for many, but there is also a lack of support and international solidarity.

Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution more than 20 years ago calling on States to reduce their military budgets and eliminate nuclear weapons, and to earmark those funds to support development programmes in developing countries, no

country of this world Organization can claim that it has benefited from the will for solidarity of the international community. After the Copenhagen Summit, my country adopted a national strategy to eliminate poverty, foster internal solidarity and create remunerative jobs. We held a national economic meeting in our country in September 1997 that defined the short- and medium-term strategy for attaining these objectives.

In order to combat poverty, the Government organized a national conference on rural development and food security, which took place in Malabo in December 1999. The Government signed cooperation agreements with the Cuban Government and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in order to implement the rural development and food security plan adopted by the conference, as a way of bringing about the sustainability that must characterize our whole strategy.

To foster internal solidarity and social cohesion, the Government has taken the following measures: a democratic consensus with political parties, through the signing of a binding national covenant; revising and updating the agreements of the covenant; ongoing negotiations on an agreed programme of governance, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme; the creation of an independent institute to promote and defend human rights and democracy, with the assistance of the United States institute for democratic strategies; and creating a subregional Central African parliament, with its headquarters in Equatorial Guinea, a Supreme Court of Justice and the Commission for the Defence and Security of Central Africa. These institutions need the support of the international community.

For the creation of remunerative jobs, the Government has taken the following actions: the adoption of measures for economic restructuring and the adoption of an economic policy to facilitate economic activity, so that the Government is not in competition with the private sector; assigning to the private sector the role of being the driving force of growth; greater facilitation of foreign investment and cooperation in order to create jobs and increase tax revenues; and the promotion of measures in our general labour law to encourage the creation of jobs.

My country has not received any substantial assistance from the international community for the implementation of this programme, and we are availing ourselves of the scant income that we receive from the incipient oil-production sector in our country.

It is unfair, in view of this situation, that my country has been classified as a medium-income country, so it cannot receive concessional credits.

Every developing country will explain here the efforts it is making to overcome the current crisis of social development. But I am sure that the world economic situation has been getting worse and worse since 1995. I would like to recall and reaffirm here that poverty, social exclusion and the absence of productive employment are a humiliation to human dignity.

The initiatives undertaken to date by the international community to help the least developed countries have been very half-hearted, insufficient and of limited effect. The situation of social development in the least developed countries requires dynamic action and pragmatism from the international community, just as the Marshall Plan did, by addressing the real problems — such as external debt — that are undermining any potential for development in those countries.

Specifically, we propose the total cancellation of the external debt of the least developed countries, under the sole condition that the resources released be earmarked for anti-poverty programmes, the creation of secure and decent employment, and social integration. This will require a strategy that not only calls for internal measures, but that extends to radical reform of the current international economic system, which must be more firmly based in the solidarity and support of States, justice and equity in international economic relations.

I wish this special session every success in its endeavours.

The President: I thank the President of Equatorial Guinea for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Zuma (South Africa): With the advent of democracy in South Africa six years ago, the newly elected Government, together with the people of our country, inherited a distorted system of governance, with institutions that were in direct conflict with the

imperatives for sustainable economic growth, social development and our reintegration into the world economy and community of nations.

We were faced with the daunting challenge of transforming our country, in a sustained and deliberate manner, in order to address the deeply entrenched poverty affecting millions of our people; a racially polarized society in terms of wealth distribution and opportunities; and a brutalized society with intolerably high levels of violence, corruption, social disintegration and moral decay.

When South Africa joined the community of nations in signing the Copenhagen Declaration in 1995, it was another critical point in our history as a young democracy. Our commitment to addressing poverty, promoting social integration, creating an enabling environment for social development, promoting full employment, building the capacity of our people and mobilizing resources for social development held special significance for us, as they still do today.

Through the rights and liberties enshrined in our Constitution and the relevant institutions — such as the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission, the Constitutional Court, the Public Protector and so on — we have ensured the protection and promotion of human rights and the restoration of the dignity of all our peoples.

Critical in all this are the public-private partnerships, including such joint negotiating forums as the National Economic, Development and Labour Council, that have created the space for the engagement of all social partners in new development partnerships. State institutions are also being restructured to enable them to promote an ethos of service, accountability and transparency and to eliminate corrupt practices at every level.

Great strides have been taken in ensuring free access to health care for children under six years of age and pregnant women. Our social security benefits are now accessible to all who are eligible, irrespective of race or sex. However, many challenges still remain, and amongst the most critical is the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has the potential to reverse all of our gains. It is clear to us that there is a direct link between HIV/AIDS and poverty. The incidence of poverty provides fertile ground for the exacerbation of this pandemic.

It is therefore of grave concern to us that vital health care and medication remain out of reach for the people who need it most, many of whom are in the South, and particularly in Africa. We therefore urge the international community to integrate the ethics of human development into trade negotiations and to ensure that the existing trade and patent regimes are not skewed in favour of the corporate sector at the expense of the most vulnerable sectors of our populations.

Our commitment to addressing poverty, promoting employment and building human capacity is evident from the initiatives we have taken to prioritize education, including the problem of illiteracy and skills development. Our commitment to addressing racism and inequality is unquestionable. We will be holding a national conference on racism in South Africa later this year and will also be hosting the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The links between the Beijing Declaration on women and the World Summit for Social Development commitments need to be reinforced, as women, children and the elderly still bear the brunt of poverty and social and economic exclusion. The translation of our vision and goals into concrete and sustainable programmes requires an enabling regional and global environment. There is no question that peace and stability are prerequisites for economic growth and sustainable development. We cannot continue to address issues of social and economic development without addressing the question of the wars and conflicts raging around the world.

We are therefore committed to the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and to building capacity for conflict prevention and management in our subregions and on the continent as a whole. However, our capacity to deliver on our social commitment to improving the lives of people in many of our countries is seriously hampered by crippling debt servicing and repayments. South Africa therefore reiterates its support for debt relief for the highly indebted and poorest nations, most of which are in Africa. In this regard, South Africa's development trajectory cannot be separated from that of its neighbours in the southern African region nor from the continent as a whole.

While much can be and is being done to strengthen our domestic response to our persistent

problems, international agreements on free and fair trade and the promotion of peace and justice are also critical. Economic growth in the region has not been sufficient to create sustainable jobs. For the region, job creation and job security remain major challenges.

Resource constraints have seriously limited the region's ability to promote job creation even through labour-intensive public works programmes. Much-needed investments in infrastructure and rural development initiatives have been set back by external debt and macroeconomic constraints.

Our commitment to address poverty, promote employment and build human capacity is also evident in the initiatives we have undertaken in our educational system. In this regard, we are reviewing our educational system to ensure that knowledge and skills are relevant to a more globally integrated world and that, at the same time, it is also able to address the problems of illiteracy and access to opportunities for poor people. Together with the ratification and implementation of international human rights instruments in countries, we would like to see mechanisms to monitor the implementation and protection of such rights.

While we all accept that good governance is essential for the protection and promotion of human rights, we cannot forget that this requires the setting up of relevant institutions within an enabling legal framework. These institutions require substantial human, material and financial resources. Many nations of the South do not have the necessary resources for these, and would need sustained technical and financial assistance. Since the last Summit, overall levels of official development assistance have declined, with most donor countries not meeting commitments made in Copenhagen. Donor countries need to be sensitive to the specific needs of recipient nations and honour aid commitments on the basis of development priorities.

We are concerned at the trend in our forums that seems to attempt to water down and renege on commitments made in the Beijing and Copenhagen Declarations. We certainly cannot remain silent, or be party to the systematic reversal of the gains made in Copenhagen and Beijing. We therefore urge countries and participants to implement commitments undertaken in Copenhagen and Beijing, and those that are going to be undertaken here at the special session. To us, as developing countries, the Copenhagen Declaration and the Beijing commitments were significant steps in addressing the legacies facing our nations, and they indeed remain important in our endeavours to create a better life for our people.

South Africa commits itself to the 20/20 initiative on social development. We urge all countries to work together to fulfil this important objective.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Africa for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am very pleased to represent and speak on behalf of Cambodia and its people at this meeting.

We are meeting here on a very appropriate occasion to discuss an overarching subject of immediate importance to all of us. This is one of the first major United Nations gatherings at the start of the new millennium, and I am particularly delighted that this session is devoting its attention entirely to social development and poverty alleviation, with particular focus on the least developed countries and their needs and handicaps arising from globalization and its impact.

Five years have passed since the United Nations World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen in 1995. That marked the first time in history that Heads of State or Government had gathered to recognize the significance of social development and human well-being for all, and to give those goals the highest priority in the twenty-first century. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action established a new consensus to place people at the centre of our concern for sustainable development, and pledged to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve a stable, safe and just society for all.

However, it is also clear that the national and international policy responses for this purpose have been uneven. Despite some advances, there has been little progress in some key areas, and regress is evident in others. Globalization and unprecedented, rapid technological advances continue to present both opportunities and challenges for social and economic

development. Never before in world history has mankind built up the potentials and capacities in science and technology to create such enormous wealth. However, the world has never before seen such disparity and inequality. The technological and scientific revolution that shortened distances and made the world smaller through the development of transportation and telecommunications coexists with the increasing gap between wealth and poverty, as well as between development and underdevelopment.

Almost 900 million people in Asia are living below the poverty line. About 30 per cent of Asians do not have access to clean water. About 50 per cent of Asian adults are illiterate. One can point to a long list of this kind of statistics, which are called the challenges of globalization by mainstream economists. In this particular context, we are all standing at an important juncture where we can invent a new, inclusive developmental paradigm that will benefit the many and uplift them to acceptable levels of human existence. In developing the new paradigm, we have to pay greater and fuller attention to the importance of building social institutions, families and communities alike, which play a crucial part in any development process. Age-old beliefs, values, traditions and relationship and behaviour patterns, so unique to each group of people and constantly being adopted to the demands of technology, are a part of modern life and anchor societies and social development. It is essential that these be preserved and enhanced, and not allowed to wither away as a result of the onslaught of influences and lifestyles brought to each door by the globalized media. Once there is a breakdown in the basic values of a society, there is no easy way to recreate what has been lost and to ensure future survival and progress.

Social capital has come to be recognized at last as an important and inevitable ingredient of progress. A first step towards the future should involve reinstating the sense of sharing that has governed human existence from the dawn of history, but that in the past few centuries has somehow been diluted in the race for economic growth. Sharing is a necessity, not a charitable act. Sharing must take place between neighbours at the individual level, between communities and between nations and regions. I believe that by practising the concept of sharing, we will be able effectively to address the concern that is foremost in our minds at present: the need to rapidly reduce growing poverty and the constantly increasing economic divide in the globalized world. In this context, sharing means providing opportunities and creating adequate conditions for poor countries to benefit from globalization. This will require the transfer of greater financial, technical and technological resources and the opening up of opportunities to poor countries so as to allow them to participate fully and on an equal footing in free trade by providing favourable access to developed markets without hidden conditionalities and domestic subsidies.

A good step in the right direction has been taken towards writing off the heavy burden of some poor countries' outstanding debts. I would like to appeal for the further development of this initiative through additional funds to help the heavily indebted countries. It must be extended to many other countries through a global strategy to deal with external debt, in the form of flexible formulas for debt reduction and rescheduling. In addition, more grant funds, rather than loans, must flow to such countries for development until a minimum threshold is reached.

However, Cambodia, as one of the poorest countries in the world, is very concerned about the overall decrease in official development assistance throughout the world, and we fully support the attempt to reach, as soon as possible, the yet-to-be-attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance. The impact of the financial turmoil in our region two years ago resulted in large-scale tragedy. That experience showed that the poor were the most vulnerable group; they were the worst affected by the crisis. There is, therefore, a dire need for a social safety net to be established to prevent future crises and for regulations, policies and measures to be put in place to ensure the smooth operation of market mechanisms. The world has spent a lot of time discussing the need to establish social safety nets and new financial architecture to control capital flows and speculative operations in the financial markets. However, it is regrettable that, so far, there has been no tangible outcome. It is time to end the rhetoric and to take concrete actions to resolve the cross-cutting issues currently faced by the world economy and financial system in order to maintain the social safety net for millions of poor people around the world who are vulnerable to all kinds of crises.

It goes without saying that the developing countries, too, have their part to play in the fight to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment, foster democracy and social integration and create an enabling environment for social development. To this end, they must adopt and apply policies to preserve peace and security within and among nations, strengthen the rule of law, ensure the existence of effective State institutions and transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, encourage the participation of all citizens in the decisions that affect their lives and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and gender equality. Furthermore, the developing countries need to implement measures for the sustainable use of natural resources and for environmental protection, so that they can continue to provide sustenance and support to all future generations.

Last but not least, capacity-building is an important means of creating a national political, social, economic and legal environment conducive to development and social progress. Priority should therefore be given to the enhancement of the capacities of the least developed countries, such as Cambodia, so that they can achieve the ultimate goals of social development, including the adoption of long-term strategies for sustainable growth and actions to implement, monitor and evaluate their policies and strategy.

I have outlined with only the broadest strokes the global needs to be debated and analysed so that common consensus can be reached on measures that are acceptable to, and that can be implemented by, all. I am convinced that the vision of and commitment to the future of mankind, which we all agreed upon in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, are entirely achievable. We do not need additional volumes of position papers. We need only to trust our collective knowledge, learn from the lessons of the past, which are immense, and put more effort and energy into implementing our own commitments. I wish the Assembly every success in its deliberations here.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Rexhep Mejdani, President of the Republic of Albania.

President Mejdani (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure, at the outset, of expressing to you, Mr. President, my deep appreciation for convening this special session devoted to the problems of social development.

Aware of the great importance of the problems of social development at this time, Albania has made great efforts to achieve the Copenhagen objectives. As a young democracy, the State of Albania is making consistent efforts to consolidate the market economy, public order, democratic institutional structures within the context of its new Constitution, adopted two years ago, and its legislation, which is constantly being improved. We should also take note of the process of decentralizing executive powers now under way through the extension of powers to local authorities, as well as the expansion of their fields of action. In this way we are able to reconcile national sovereignty with supranational — European or international — authority, and with globalization and its attendant phenomenon, regionalization.

Considering that economic development is necessarily an important element and an integral part of social development, the State and the Government of Albania have made national economic development a priority. To this end, specific measures have been implemented to promote the privatization process in the strategic sectors of the Albanian economy, including the banking system, to stimulate and support local investment and to attract foreign investment.

Regarding the commitments of the State and the Government of Albania to promote the development of Albanian society and the achievement of the Copenhagen Summit goals, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the productive cooperation established between Albania and the World Bank. This was achieved through the implementation of a series of projects important to Albanian society and also thanks to the development and study of social development projects to combat a negative phenomenon prevailing in Albania, in our region and in other poor countries — "brain drain" — which is reducing the civic, intellectual and democratic potential of the countries affected and is accompanied by considerable social damage and economic loss.

I also wish to welcome the initiative taken recently by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to provide assistance to alleviate poverty throughout the world. This, in my view, represents important progress in moving from the social market economy to the moral market economy; in other words, a social market economy at the global level.

Despite the achievements I have just mentioned, Albania is facing many social problems that are the direct result of a difficult transition period and of the repeated crises that have struck the country and the region, such as those that have struck Kosovo. The State and the Government of Albania are studying the appropriate ways and means of implementing integrated action to alleviate poverty, while taking into account the community's social capital. This means establishing normal living standards wherever people live.

The Government of Albania will also, as a part of this strategy, examine the possibility of implementing public works programmes in the most disadvantaged communities, as well as specific projects and effective action for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, such as the elderly, the orphaned and the various groups of disabled persons.

The commitment of all the countries in our region to the Stability Pact initiative will, I hope, open new avenues of development to the participating countries. In this context, the Government and the State of Albania are fully committed to making their contribution to the stabilization and long-term development of the region by supporting the processes of peace, tolerance, coexistence and the establishment of democratic institutions in the Kosovo region.

I should like to point out that the work being done today in drafting the three aspects of the Stability Pact will have a very positive impact on the economic and social development of the entire region, whose population is equal to approximately 15 per cent of the population of the European Union, while its gross national product is only 0.7 per cent of that of the European Union. In my opinion, the main point to emphasize here is that we must begin work immediately in order to complete these drafts. It is time to move away from repetitive meetings and conferences to specific achievements, avoiding all kinds of bureaucracy, particularly financial bureaucracy.

In this context, I wish to emphasize that we consider the free movement of people, ideas, capital and goods the basis of strong social and economic development and, consequently, of democracy in our region. A common economic bloc in the Balkans, a sort of mini-Schengen, would vigorously stimulate the development desired in the region by providing the essential impetus to the overall vision and concept of the Stability Pact.

In the context of these positive developments, Albania appreciates the current role of the United Nations, the European Community, the United States of America and other countries, and we hope that the interest expressed in the development and democratization of the region will continue to reflect the same degree of commitment and intensity in the future.

In conclusion, once again I wish you, Mr. President, and the delegations present a productive session for the greater well-being of prosperity and social development throughout the world.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Albania for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jaime David Fernández Mirabal, Vice-President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Fernández Mirabal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of President Leonel Fernandez and our Government, we hail the holding of this event.

Several world summits took place in the decade of the nineties — we could call it the "summit decade". But we believe that the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development really summarized the aspirations of our peoples and the commitment of our political generation.

We have a sense of the continuity of the State, and in 1996 we prepared a national plan for social development, believing that one of the greatest shortcomings in the commitments of the summits is that the average man and woman in the street, both in developed and in developing countries, and the grass-roots social organizations do not really know what commitments have been entered into by our Governments, so no social sector is really fighting to foster the fulfilment of those agreements. Citizens in the developed countries do not raise their voices so that

the commitments assumed by their countries will be fulfilled, nor are citizens in our developing countries organizing in order to put into action the commitments entered into. In order to reform and modernize the State, therefore, we are trying to mould this national plan for social development by involving all social sectors, Government institutes and local governments, with the support of multilateral and bilateral cooperative agencies.

We believe in participation and in decentralization as a strategy to achieve more awareness of what these commitments are and how we can carry them out. We believe that the age in which peoples benefited from the goodwill and good intentions of those in power is an age of the past, because it promoted a paternalistic and caretaking attitude. People can no longer be the object of our good intentions; rather, they must be a subject of the dynamic of development, must feel part and parcel of the dynamic. It is not a matter of working for the people, but with the people, not a matter of working for the peoples, but with the peoples. This will guarantee our being able to reach the targets established at the Summit for Social Development.

In the Dominican Republic, we have worked to strengthen our institutions, fostering respect for the rules of the game, democracy and justice in order to guarantee rights, especially of women, of children and of the disabled. But we have tried to work not only to promote rights, but also to promote the fulfilment of our duties so that there is a balance between rights and duties.

We have worked to promote employment, which has enabled us to bring down the unemployment rate in the Dominican Republic and to maintain an 8 per cent growth of gross domestic product in the last four years. We have managed to halve infant and maternal mortality and to reduce school dropout and illiteracy rates by more than 50 per cent.

But this is not enough to attain the goals that we set for ourselves. There is something we wish to take note of: the development of technology has been creating what we could call a "digital gap", which is to say that there are populations that have access to the Internet, to new communication technology, and there are other large populations that have no access. This gap will continue to heighten the difference between those who have opportunities and those who do not. Because of this, the Dominican Republic has managed this year to set up computer laboratories in all middle and secondary schools so that we have a balance in information. Thus, while at the same time addressing the social debt of the past and access of the people to basic services, we are also plugging into the computer age, so that there is a balance between present needs and future aspirations in the new information age.

We believe that it is necessary to devise a common agenda, of Governments and civil society, so that there will be a mutual commitment between the parties. We think that there should be more cooperation, not in the form of donations, but rather as financing for development. There must be a greater will to cooperate and to reduce the levels of bureaucracy in the agencies of international cooperation.

We reiterate the commitment of our Government and of our political generation to fight harder and harder against poverty by involving all actors. We understand development as a state of well-being in dignity; in other words, quality of life but also inalienable principles such as freedom and democracy.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Dominican Republic for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Flight-Lieutenant (Retired) Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana.

President Rawlings: I must say how appreciative I am of this opportunity to address the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the special session. We feel very confident that under your able leadership the work of the session will be carried out successfully.

I also wish to express the thanks and appreciation of the Government of Ghana, our people and members of our delegation to Mr. Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to the Government and the people of the Swiss Federation for hosting this important meeting and for placing such magnificent facilities at our disposal. However, coming from Africa, I do not know whom to blame for the lack of water on the tables. The advance of summer could probably make it worse for those of us who, with our skins, absorb more heat than those of you who reflect heat. I will need some water.

Following the 1995 World Summit, in spite of actions taken at the national, regional and international levels, the world's social situation is far from meeting the goals of that Summit. We have come to Geneva to participate in the Copenhagen + 5 special session because we all believe in the programmes we agreed on and the targets we set ourselves five years ago. We are very confident that all our colleagues, as well as our development partners, are also here and that, together, we will demonstrate support for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

Painful as the short-term consequences of structural adjustment policies may be, many of our countries have implemented them in the hope that international economic relations would change so that their real long-term benefits might be felt. Unfortunately, our expectations have not quite been met. Our education objective is to attain the Social Summit's target of 100 per cent school enrolment and the sustained provision of quality education.

Ghana's commitment to the provision of universal access to basic health care is evidenced by over 60 per cent of the health sector budget's being appropriated to primary health care and the provision of health care facilities, particularly in the rural areas. Our health strategy provides free medical care to pregnant women, children under five and other minors. HIV/AIDS continues to pose a problem not only to my country, but to our continent and others in the developing community. We will therefore urge the developed world to extend even further to developing countries greater access to advanced medication against the disease and to eliminate mother-to-child transmissions.

As part of Ghana's employment generation strategy, the country's investment code has been revised and a Free Zones Area established in order to attract investors. A District Assemblies Common Fund has been set up, partly to be used as lines of credit to create employment opportunities by supporting small enterprises.

As some of my colleagues have already said, transparency in governance is an essential requirement for creating an enabling environment for meaningful economic and social development. But transparency must operate at both ends of the developing and the developed world.

Since the 1995 Copenhagen Summit, a number of Governments of developing countries have been overthrown on corruption charges and the trail of evidence has invariably led to the financial and banking institutions of some of our Western brothers and sisters. When in Copenhagen in 1995, I called for the relaxation of the rules of banking confidentiality and secrecy so that we could contain, if not stop, the perpetrators, as had been done in the case of drug monies and laundering. There were some who thought it was an idea whose time had not yet come.

Now, that time has come and we are beginning to hear the signals. Let me put this question to those here who represent members of the European community. What are we going to do? If we want a truly transparent governance system in our countries, then the Governments of the developed world and their financial and banking institutions must cooperate with us. They must pass the necessary legislation to make it impossible for the proceeds of corruption in the developing countries to be kept in their countries and in their vaults. Where this is done, they must make it possible for us to uncover and recover some of these proceeds.

In our countries, the governance systems are not only at risk from the military and fears of *coups d'état*. Most important of all, they are also probably at greater risk from civilians who corrupt the electoral process through disinformation, misinformation and the use of corrupt monies, whether obtained from domestic or from foreign sources.

Another glaring obstacle to transparent governance that must also engage our attention are attempts at interference in the electoral processes in our countries, even when these are clearly against our laws. Today, a good number of us know that there seems to be an unwritten rule in the Western world that, for there to be a perception of democracy — be it real or false — in a developing country, the incumbent Government must necessarily give way, change or be changed. Sadly, the question of whether that Government is doing well, through good leadership or not, seems to be irrelevant. Therefore, the opposition must be given material, financial and moral support from some Members here to achieve this objective. This does not very often exclude undermining the integrity of the ruling Government.

I am not saying that the ruling Governments are above board; however, given the extent of disinformation and misinformation put out by some

opposition parties — not all of them — in some developing countries and the effectiveness with which this is communicated by modern information technology, especially the Internet, one is almost tempted to forgive innocent foreigners who are taken in by this propaganda. But some of us know that many are not that innocent and do it in pursuit of their own agenda. This is not unacceptable and, with all our good intentions, we must make every effort to bring it to a stop.

What can we do with such resources? Quite frankly, I believe that such resources must be channelled to meet the basic needs of our people and thereby strengthen genuine and real democracy.

When we ask for development assistance, it is not only because we want to satisfy the basic needs of our people. But the stark truth is that if we do not get it, and are therefore not able to provide those barest amenities, my people — our people — will emigrate to your countries — the countries of the developed world, where they will add to the refugee, social security and racial problems of your very own countries. For those of us who try to deal with those basic needs, meagre resources have to be diverted to prevent or resolve conflicts, either in our own countries or in our own subregions. And these conflicts are not unrelated to the same struggle for the control of our resources, diamonds being the latest in the long list of resources that have fuelled Africa's conflicts. Yet without resolving these conflicts, we cannot talk about the social development of our people, which is why we have gathered here in Geneva.

We must adopt policies and programmes that will enhance resource mobilization in these countries, including those for debt relief, equitable international trade relations, and reversing the decline of official development assistance and foreign direct investment. Economic shocks, which are easily weathered by your nations, the wealthier nations, as mere temporary inconveniences, for us — where we come from — lead to very severe economic dislocations. In Ghana, for instance, the combination of low world prices for gold, cocoa and other commodities, which are the lifeblood of my country and its economy, coupled with the sharp increase in the world market prices for crude oil, is causing havoc not only in our national economy, but also in the economies of other developing countries. Those crises can easily translate into very unacceptable possible political fallouts, and that is what you will see on your screens in terms of the barbarism of my continent.

This time, and on this particular issue, my appeal goes to the oil-producing countries, a good number of which I hope are gathered here, to do something about world oil prices to enable the poor countries of the world to survive and have some resources to promote social development. We are doing our best in very difficult circumstances, but we need to be supported in order to succeed.

Let us not leave Geneva having only paid lip-service to social development. Let us not leave Geneva feeling satisfied with a successful summit. Let us leave Geneva with practical and workable strategies that will give further impetus to the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Let us give hope to the poor of the world. Let us all do our duty on behalf of the bleeding, hard-working peoples of the disadvantaged world.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Hage G. Geingob, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Geingob (Namibia): Let me begin by paying tribute to you, Mr. President, and by telling you that the Namibian people asked me to give you the message that they are very proud to see you preside over the business of the General Assembly. In particular, the people of Usakos told me that they are indeed proud to see you presiding over the Assembly.

Namibians are equally proud to see another African managing the affairs of the world body.

We are equally happy with the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Mr. Cristián Maquieira, for his commendable efforts in the preparation of this very important special session.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Juan Somavía, who is the brains behind the initiative for the holding of the Summit for Social Development.

Given the nature and the broad scope of many of the goals and targets expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, Namibia recognizes that achieving the agreed goals will require much stronger and more comprehensive action,

political will and adequate financial resources. Because of the interlinkages among the 10 commitments on social development, Namibia has identified poverty eradication, employment creation and social integration as core issues for immediate remedial action. Within our first 10 years of independence, we have embarked upon the task of addressing these core issues through establishing the required national action plans.

We have put in place and maintained well-functioning physical infrastructure, strong institutional underpinnings for market development, sound economic policies and a well-organized apparatus of public administration. Since 1998, per capita income in Namibia has amounted to $1,748, and the real growth rate has averaged over 3 per cent annually, while the budget deficit has been kept well below 5 per cent and inflation relatively low, in the single digits. We believe, however, that effective poverty eradication will require sustained and higher per capita gross domestic product growth if we are to reduce poverty.

Poverty in Namibia is concentrated among the historically disadvantaged groups, and is disproportionately found among rural people. In partnership with multilateral actors, we have established an integrated strategy for sustainable poverty reduction in Namibia. The strategy focuses on three areas that are considered key to progress in poverty reduction, and highlights the need to foster, in the context of Namibia's commitment to regional decentralization, more equitable and efficient delivery of public services for poverty reduction country-wide; an acceleration of equitable agricultural expansion, including consideration of food security and other crop development options; and the identification of options for non-agricultural economic empowerment, including an emphasis on the informal sector and self-employment options.

While we continue to make strenuous efforts to implement our strategies and action programmes, I wish to emphasize that the classification of Namibia as a middle-income country by some financial institutions will jeopardize our chances of accessing the financial resources required for the effective implementation of the poverty reduction strategy.

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Namibia is threatening the social and economic gains we have made to date. Hence, HIV/AIDS is a serious developmental challenge for us. We therefore reiterate our call for affordable drugs for HIV/AIDS and other related diseases. Furthermore, the international community should join hands in complementing the efforts of African countries in their fight against malaria.

In the area of employment creation, we have established labour-intensive programmes, which have shown substantial promise as remedies for expanding employment, stabilizing incomes during periods of drought and building infrastructure.

With regard to social protection, we have been able to establish both grant-based and contributory schemes. Social pensions for the elderly is by far the most important grant-based formal transfer safety net, and accounts for more than 2 per cent of gross domestic product. In addition to social pensions, disability grants and selective child and family allowances are important parts of the safety net. In order to widen the area of coverage, we have recently passed new legislation — the War Veterans Subvention Act — which makes provision for establishing a trust fund for war veterans.

In addition to these programmes, we have also established a compulsory maternity protection scheme and an employees' compensation fund, which are both funded from the contributions of employers and employees.

In our quest to foster social and economic integration, Namibia recognizes that globalization has stimulated growth and prosperity and expanded possibilities for millions of people all over the world. At the same time, globalization has diminished prospects for poorer nations and reinforced inequalities within and among the nations of the world. We believe that sound economic policies, transparency and accountability are crucial ingredients for effective social development. Therefore, partnerships with multilateral and bilateral actors are required to successfully promote sustainable development.

Our aim is to create a society for all, where every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Gender mainstreaming is therefore regarded as a priority.

We call upon the international community to support us in our efforts to create critical infrastructure services. In this regard, serious attention should be given to the systemic biases and asymmetries in the

workings of the international trading system, which limit the growth prospects of poorer nations. It is no longer realistic to expect developing countries to meaningfully promote economic and social development in their countries while at the same time continuing to service the debt. The debt of developing countries therefore needs to be cancelled — and cancelled now, at this conference.

Today's problems affect the entire global community of nations. We must therefore develop local responses to global problems. Let us, together, ensure that the twenty-first century becomes a new era of progress, solidarity and hope.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): Allow me to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Mr. President, in the Chair during this very important special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world". You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation. Allow me also to extend our deepest gratitude to the Government and the people of Switzerland for so graciously hosting this special session.

Five years ago in Copenhagen, one of the largest gatherings of heads of State or Government took place to chart a new course for humanity's collective response to the challenge posed by the triple scourges of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The commitments that the heads of State or Government made on that occasion were momentous, as they marked a new era in which the centrality of people in the development process was recognized. We are here, five years later, to take stock of how far we have gone in meeting the tasks that we set for ourselves: how far we have succeeded in reducing poverty, advancing access to gainful employment and accelerating social integration. A backward glance is important not only for identifying the failures and successes of our past efforts, but also for creating a strong basis for future programmes.

The one phenomenon that has caused the most ripples in the period between the Copenhagen Summit and this special session in Geneva is globalization. This runaway horse has the ability to carry very far those who are strong and skilled riders, who can cling to its back as it hurtles forth at great speed and with tremendous force. The very same horse, however, can also throw off the weak and unskilled riders, with dire consequences. Unfortunately, the great majority of us are such weak and unskilled riders, who need to be helped to stay on the horse and travel the great distance that is possible.

The need to enable the weaker developing countries to mitigate the punishing consequences of failing to stay on the horse of globalization was most dramatically demonstrated by the reversal of the gains that the countries of South-East Asia had made in poverty reduction. Those gains were wiped out in one fell swoop during the financial crisis of 1997. That crisis underscored these countries' incapacity to offset the ravages of volatile movements of short-term capital.

Permit me to briefly share with the Assembly the efforts we are making as a nation to fulfil our Copenhagen commitments. The strategy for Lesotho's development endeavours since Copenhagen has been to emphasize sustainable human development. In this regard, we have designed a poverty reduction plan whose basic premise is that people should be enabled to live long, healthy lives, acquire knowledge and have resources that are necessary to accommodate their human needs. The plan has identified as priority areas good governance, poverty reduction, improving social services for the poor, creating employment and income opportunities for the poor and addressing poverty-related environmental degradation. The Lesotho Social Fund for Community Development has thus been established with our own resources for the purpose of funding these activities.

Regarding employment creation, we are diminishing our reliance on the public sector as the largest employer in favour of creating an enabling environment for the private sector to complement the public sector. Government is also streamlining its own institutional framework for undertaking public works to make them more efficient and better able to absorb the large numbers of unemployed. Furthermore, as a greater number of the domestic labour force increasingly derives employment from the informal

sector, we are in the process of strengthening linkages between the formal and the informal sectors, improving rural infrastructure, providing opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial skills and expanding market opportunities and access to credit, in particular microcredit.

For the health sector, a well-developed network of services is in place through cooperation among Government, the churches and non-governmental organizations and with the support and assistance of several development partners. Access to health services has been improved, even in the most remote areas, as priority is given to primary health care. Eighty per cent of the population now has access to health facilities, and an estimated 56 per cent has access to safe drinking water.

Significant improvements have also been made in raising life expectancy and reducing infant mortality. Indeed, infant mortality decreased from 85 per thousand in 1986 to 74 per thousand in 1996, while life expectancy increased from 55 to 59 during the same reference period. Furthermore, a comprehensive health reform programme is under implementation. This plan derives from the realization that the health gains that were made in the past have been eroded due to, among other causes, the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the resurgence of tuberculosis, increasing population and insufficient resources.

In education, Government has given priority to early childhood development and basic primary education. Starting this year, free primary education has been introduced for the first grade and will be introduced in succeeding grades from year to year. The improvements in the quality of education have also been achieved through higher teacher-pupil and classroom-pupil ratios. A deliberate effort has also been made to increase budgetary allocations for education by 4 per cent annually, until we reach the desired level of efficiency. In this connection, the budgetary allocation for education has increased from 81.2 million maloti in 1990 to 518 million maloti this year, which represents 28 per cent of the national budget and easily the largest allocation to any sector.

The pressure on Lesotho's meagre financial resources resulting from this mammoth undertaking cannot, however, be overemphasized. The empowerment of women is a necessary condition for attaining our objectives in the social field. Discrimination against women, therefore, inhibits our efforts in this field. In an effort to combat all forms of discrimination against women, Lesotho has amended a number of laws; for example, the Land Act of 1979 has now been amended to give widows the full right to inherit their husband's residential property. Similarly, the Pensions Act of 1966 has been amended to allow women to receive pensions on a basis similar to that allowed for their male counterparts. In addition, our new labour code unequivocally prohibits discrimination against women and makes it a crime to dismiss women from employment on the grounds of pregnancy.

On the issue of governance, we are committed to developing and maintaining a high quality civil service that will undertake the core activities of maintaining law and order, ensuring protection and respect for human rights and delivering social services. Thus, Government is implementing a civil service reform programme which will ensure the right-sizing of the civil service, improve conditions of service, and boost morale.

Although considerable progress has been achieved, as indicated above, the battle is by no means won. Poverty remains pervasive in Lesotho and is the greatest constraint to human development. For this reason, our strategy will continue to be focused on sustainable human development in the years to come. A deliberate effort will be made to continue to target national resources on the areas where the poor are mostly concentrated, as well as to continue to implement special schemes for employment generation.

Despite efforts to increase access to education, the overall enrolment trend continues to be of concern to the Government of Lesotho. The latest data indicate that 69 per cent of children aged between 6 and 12 years were in attendance in 1997, compared to 75 per cent in 1990. Furthermore, a disparity continues to exist between enrolment for girls and boys. Generally, primary school enrolment for girls is higher than that for boys because traditionally boys are expected to herd livestock. Another problem is the high drop-out rate and repetition rate, which we hope the introduction of free primary education will redress.

The Government of Lesotho continues to monitor these developments closely and will aim to increase the allocation of resources to the Ministry of Education, particularly for primary education.

Although I mentioned earlier that there is considerable progress in the area of health, I wish to stress that the HIV/AIDS pandemic will have disastrous consequences for our development endeavours. The number of cumulative cases has risen, while our difficulty in this area is compounded by a lack of accurate data. However, what data is available indicates that the 15-to-49 age group is the hardest hit. The pandemic is also rising among expectant mothers. Recognizing this problem, our approach is that HIV/AIDS is not an issue for the health sector alone and that all sectors should make a concerted effort in the fight against it. In this connection, we are finalizing our national HIV/AIDS control and prevention policy and strategic plan, which will encompass all sectors and thus make our response a truly national one.

Regarding access to safe drinking water, although there has been progress, only about 56 per cent of the rural population has been served. The constraints include not only the shortage of resources but the inaccessibility of some of the remote areas. With respect to sanitary facilities, the poor find their cost prohibitive. Finally, we are making efforts to assist the poor by providing them with the necessary health education in order to empower them to make informed decisions about their environmental health.

The Government of Lesotho is fully committed to developing a culture of democracy, good governance, observance of human rights and constitutionality. In 1993 Lesotho, after over 20 years of unelected governments, held an election which marked a return to democracy. Another election was held in 1998, but that election was, unfortunately, disputed by three of the losing political parties, and their protests resulted in violent actions leading to the looting and burning of businesses. These, coupled with a mutiny by junior army officers, brought the country to the verge of collapse, and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) troops were brought in to restore order.

This situation had a negative impact on the economy because of the closure and liquidation of several businesses and the consequential loss of jobs. Lesotho's economy was plunged into recession, with the annual growth rate declining from 8 per cent in 1997 to 5.5 per cent in 1998. Again, through SADC intervention, all political parties have come together to constitute a body which is called the Interim Political Authority, which is charged with the responsibility of preparing for fresh elections. These elections are now scheduled to take place sometime in the first half of next year.

In the meantime, the Government is pursuing a programme of reconstruction which includes the creation of a climate of political reconciliation on which the consolidation of democratic gains and democratic culture can rest; the redirection of energies to laying the foundation of sustainable human development; the realization of the major national objectives of poverty alleviation, employment creation, social integration and conservation of land; the creation of an environment conducive to economic growth; the attraction and expansion of foreign investment; the supporting of efficient service delivery at all levels by ensuring good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights; and increased civil participation in development.

To conclude, let me observe that globalization is driven by market forces and that the vehicle for these is the private sector, especially multinational corporations. However, the sectors of education and health, which are the bedrock of our social development programme, do not easily lend themselves to private-sector funding. If we are to win the war against poverty, therefore, developing countries cannot be expected to fight solely with their limited financial resources. Increased official development assistance and debt reduction, not only for heavily indebted poor countries, as present global debt-reduction strategies contemplate, but also for all debt-stressed least developed countries, are an overwhelming imperative.

As we review the extent to which we have been faithful to the spirit of Copenhagen, one thing is clear: that the commitment to cooperate as one human family is far from being realized. The continuing inadequacy of resources for development in developing countries cannot be a basis on which the war against poverty can be fought. If nothing else, at least that one reality must change in the post-Geneva era.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Michael Ritter, Deputy Prime Minister of the Principality of Liechstenstein.

Mr. Ritter (Liechstenstein): Let me at the outset express my thanks and appreciation to the Government and to the people of Switzerland for their hospitality and for providing us with such excellent arrangements.

Five years after the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, where we expressed our will to give increased priority to social development in our national and international policy objectives and where we decided to put people at the centre of our development efforts, we are reuniting these days to renew our commitment to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve a stable, safe and just society for all.

Even though many new national policies and programmes have been initiated in the past years, the situation worldwide has not improved as substantially as we would have wished. In some key areas, even, regress is evident. We therefore strongly believe that common and comprehensive efforts have to be maintained to implement the 10 commitments we all accepted five years ago. In the outcome document we will adopt later this week, we will not only reaffirm the commitments of Copenhagen by reviewing the results of its implementation but also agree on further initiatives.

The eradication of poverty continues to hold its place at the top of national and international policy agendas, as the gap between rich and poor countries continues to grow in spite of existing plans and programmes and measures taken since the Summit. We believe that human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions and a market economy favour economic and social development, and we have therefore always sought to promote these rights and principles in the appropriate forums.

It is evident that not only values, but also resources are needed for an improvement of economic and social development. By contributing to various programmes and projects, Liechtenstein would like to express its continued support for the international fight against poverty. We consider efforts towards social cohesion, mutual tolerance, justice and equality to be very challenging tasks that can be fulfilled only in close cooperation among all countries.

In Liechtenstein, we are in the privileged position of being able to provide our inhabitants with a comprehensive network of social security and financial assistance. The unemployment situation in most regions of the world has slowly improved over the past few years, but continues to be one of the major problems of developing as well as industrialized countries.

Especially in the labour market, gender equality has to be promoted and gender discrimination has to be eliminated. This means not only the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, but also other legal guarantees against all forms of discrimination in the workplace. Liechtenstein established these rights in the Equality Act of March 1999. Further measures and specific actions are needed, especially with regard to empowering women to participate in the public decision-making and implementation process and in the remunerated work process, and to ensuring their access to all kinds and all levels of jobs.

On the other hand, men have to be encouraged to assume their share of family and social responsibilities. This requires, in particular, more flexible working arrangements and the availability of quality child-care facilities. Every year, the Liechtenstein Government reviews the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and decides on a set of measures to achieve de facto equality between women and men in all spheres of life.

Social integration is another central issue in a world haunted by violent ethnic conflicts, racism and other forms of discrimination. We have had to note that prosperity and public welfare alone cannot prevent psychological suffering, social disintegration or a high rate of suicide. On the contrary, we must assume that prosperity leads to an increase of dissatisfaction and uncertainty, to egoism and a lack of solidarity.

We have come to realize that the pure granting of financial assistance to individuals, without expecting anything in return, makes people more and more demanding. At the same time, the willingness and ability of people to look after themselves are decreasing. People should not be reduced to being passive objects of public welfare.

We have therefore come to the conclusion that, whenever assistance is granted, it is reasonable to expect something in return — something which the concerned person is able to provide within his or her abilities and possibilities. Of course, people in need have the right to material and psychological help, but the principle of getting a service in return is a key element of our social policy.

Social attachment and cooperation are the elements of society's cohesion. Social networks, families, neighbourhoods, voluntary associations and new management cultures have to be supported by all means. Similar efforts for the improvement of the material basis should, in the spirit of Copenhagen, be undertaken to stock up on social capital. There is no fateful development, but political and economic decisions that lead to the destruction or accumulation of social capital.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.

United Nations A/S-24/PV.2

General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

2nd meeting
Monday, 26 June 2000, 3 p.m.
Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

Crown Prince Albert (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): I am particularly pleased, Mr. President, at seeing you preside over the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and I congratulate you. Speaking both as the head of the delegation of Monaco and as a Vice-President of the Assembly, I wish to say that you can count on my unreserved support.

The work of this world conference is particularly important, as it is taking place at a time of exceptionally speedy and profound change in the world. Despite the many positive qualities of globalization, which is the essence of that change, today its disadvantages are becoming obvious to the eyes of attentive observers. It would therefore be inappropriate to continue to sing the praises of globalization without some reservation, especially after the serious disappointments that have piled up since the Copenhagen Summit. Similarly, I also think that we should not condemn it out-of-hand and blame it for every evil.

A challenge to the established order, which may sometimes be painful, is to be expected when scientific and technological progress brings about sudden and profound changes in human societies. We are now living through just such a revolution, which is having disruptive effects in countries in transition and developing countries, as well as developed ones. It therefore behoves us to get a better grasp of these changes in order to try to remedy their most harmful effects on human beings and on their legitimate aspirations to take advantage of the social and economic benefits those changes bring.

There is no doubt that the progress that has been made in communications and in the exchange of information initially benefited economic liberalization, which lends itself more readily to adaptation than does political power, whose influence requires time and room to take hold. The wisdom of our countries is beginning to awaken. After a useful period of reflection, political leaders in many of our countries, in conjunction with the dynamic forces of civil society and of the working world, are devoting themselves to taking control of the most nefarious effects of this

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technological revolution at both the national and international levels.

The market economy is also experiencing its natural limits. It no longer appears to respond exclusively to the satisfaction of basic individual and collective long-term needs. Its ambition is now short-term and is out of sync with the slow pace of change in human societies. As Max Weber pointed out, in order for capitalism to be established enduringly, a process of maturation and adaptation to social values is required. In reality, a liberalized economy can find no lasting justification unless its benefits extend to entire populations, as well as to the people of both the North and the South. Social development is therefore more allied with liberalism than it is in implacable opposition to it.

It is this philosophy, and its own deep sense of social responsibility, that inspire the actions of the Government of the Principality of Monaco. On the enlightened initiative of my father, the Sovereign Prince, the Government of Monaco takes its decisions with a long-term view. It invests in the education of its young people and in adult education in order to ensure that the working population can adapt to new technologies and ways of working. The public authorities pay particular attention to people seeking work, and offers them free opportunities to improve their knowledge, especially in the areas of foreign languages and computer science.

Since 1995, a system has been in place to facilitate the professional reintegration of persons experiencing difficulties. If necessary, those persons can be assisted by a tutor. The salaries of these surplus staff are now guaranteed by the State.

The Government of Monaco has made significant social and economic provisions for persons experiencing great difficulty, handicapped people, elderly persons and children with acute life problems. These include not only providing grants, but also moral support such as that offered by the organization called "Jeunes J'écoute" and, to a certain extent, by the Princess Stephanie Youth Centre.

With the assistance of home-care workers, a home service was established in 1998 for elderly and handicapped persons.

All the people of Monaco can avail themselves of family and housing assistance services, even though the priority beneficiaries of those services are the most disadvantaged.

The social services of the local government, which is very close to the population, and those of charity groups have the regular support and encouragement of the State and are useful additions to this mechanism.

The approach of the authorities of Monaco to social development is characterized by a large degree of volunteerism.

Moreover, Monaco's social policy is coordinated by a public system whose resources represent almost 10 per cent of the State's operating budget and 5.25 per cent of its annual budget.

The national report produced for this special session sets out in detail the ways in which this commitment is carried out and outlines Monaco's efforts at the international level. Those efforts are carried out in accordance with our country's capabilities and take various forms. The Government of the Principality makes annual voluntary contributions to various United Nations programmes such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. It also very regularly makes its contribution to the United Nations Children's Fund and to the United Nations funds set up for handicapped persons. In 1999, it also contributed to the fund established for the International Year of Older Persons and the one set up to facilitate the preparations for this special session.

Furthermore, the authorities of Monaco have recently decided to make a substantial contribution to the World Health Organization programme to oversee the battle against emerging, re-emerging and communicable diseases, as well as to the Alliance of Cities Against Poverty.

The Principality of Monaco is a very active partner in the International Organization of la Francophonie, whose concerns about cultural identity and social development it shares, particularly now, during these times of globalization. Monaco makes its voluntary contribution to cooperation among countries that have French as a common language. The declaration adopted by that organization reflects our will to globalize solidarity, and it will certainly be a

valuable source of inspiration as we implement the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

Several non-governmental organizations established in the Principality of Monaco undertake many missions to implement social development work in developing countries. The Monaco authorities will ensure that significant support is provided to them.

The Red Cross of Monaco, of which I am President, having taken over from my mother, Princess Grace, gives a large part of its resources, which often come from gifts and legacies, to countries affected by war, famine or other natural disasters.

The World Association of Friends of Children (AMADE), which is presided over by my sister, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Hanover, is very active, and has representation in some 20 countries. In addition to its determination to protect young children, in keeping with a resolution adopted in 1993 at the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and its efforts to mobilize the young people of Monaco to help young people who are less fortunate, AMADE is developing many social programmes in the countries of the South, including building school complexes, training centres and houses for children, as well as setting up integrated rural development projects.

The "schools of the four winds", which have been set up for street children, and the international "Tears without Eyes" programme to fight nutritional blindness, which is being undertaken with the cooperation of UNICEF, can also be credited to that Association.

The Monaco Aid and Presence Association, supported by the State, contributes to relief for civilian victims of armed conflict, thanks to a very effective volunteer medical team. It also undertakes activities for long-term social development, such as setting up orphanages and institutions for handicapped children in India and Sri Lanka. It has also established dispensaries in India and the Niger to provide health services and health care to people in need. In 1997, the organization began a family housing initiative in Brazil and set up a primary school — the Prince Rainier III School — in Madagascar for 1,700 children.

Finally, thanks to Mission Childhood, social development activities are being carried out in sensitive regions, often with the cooperation of United Nations or European Union bodies. At present, such activities, mainly those relating to the provision of food, health care or education, are taking place in 13 countries.

In conclusion, I would like to share the optimism of our Secretary-General, to whom I pay an emphatic tribute for encouraging us, in paragraph 53 of his report on the impact of globalization on social development (A/AC.253/25),

> "to 'manage' the process of globalization better so as to minimize its negative effects, make the opportunities provided by globalization available to all and spread its benefits wider".

My country has chosen that path, and, through me, it reaffirms its total attachment to the decisions of the Copenhagen Summit and the conclusions that are to be adopted on Friday at this special session.

The President: I thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ali Najafi, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): This special session is indeed a unique opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, evaluate the accomplishments made thus far and the obstacles encountered along the way, identify the challenges ahead, and agree on a set of further initiatives and practical measures to meet these challenges and ensure a more effective drive towards social development. Indeed, the Copenhagen Summit dealt with the most comprehensive issues and produced a new global social contract.

The review and assessment of the implementation of the Copenhagen outcome clearly presents a mixed picture. Despite modest advances in some areas and the initiation of many new national policies and programmes in various societies, the overall result has been much less than satisfactory. The most striking area of disparity between the objectives and reality is the inequality within and among States, which continues to grow. Effectively combating social ills and achieving genuine long-term social development depends on organizing a meaningful global drive against want and poverty. Such a drive calls for an international economic environment conducive to a

more balanced distribution of wealth; a rule-based, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system; market access; debt relief; and a more responsive international financial system. Humanizing overall economic policy reforms is imperative for the creation of a genuinely caring society.

The intensity of the still ongoing negotiations on the text of the final outcome of this review conference is a clear indication of the challenges we all face in the international community in the implementation of the Copenhagen consensus. Moreover, it is also indicative of the contention between the countries of the developing world and their developed partners with regard to their respective areas and order of priorities. The process of globalization, despite its promises of new opportunities, has, as a matter of fact, made the implementation of the Copenhagen outcome much more difficult for most developing societies. The present conference should devote itself to arriving at a consensus on those further initiatives that will contribute to the more effective and meaningful implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and Programme of Action.

Let me now turn to the national scene. Having actively participated in the Copenhagen Summit and made a contribution to its final outcome, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has vigorously pursued the implementation of the outcome and accorded high priority to the objectives of social development. A substantial improvement in the past few years in the indices of social services, including in the field of education at all levels, access to basic health services and access to safe drinking water, is indicative of the progress achieved thus far, as well as the potential for further betterment. At a more general level, the third five-year national development plan for 2000-2004 has been designed to institute reforms in various social and economic fields, and contains a strong orientation towards social development. The plan's implementation is to be facilitated by policy development, the promulgation of necessary legislation and the allocation of requisite resources.

The promotion of overall social development has been an integral part of the policy of President Khatami's Administration since it took office in August 1997. The Government's policy, devoted to institutionalizing the rule of law, the promotion of accountability and transparency, the improvement of governance at all levels and the expansion and strengthening of the status and role of civil society at the national level, has contributed to the process of social development in Iran. The popular reform process, which is still under way within Iranian society and is aimed at transforming various aspects and dimensions of our social and political life in the framework of the Constitution, shows the depth and reach of our nation's collective drive towards social development and social justice. The three recent popular elections held in Iran since 1997, in which the reform platform triumphed, are also clear indications of the national will, as well as of the Government's dedication to the attainment of social development.

In our view, achievement of social development calls for the resolute will and determination of the entire human community. It requires action at the national level and cooperation at the international level. It goes without saying that the attainment of social development depends primarily on conflict resolution and on the establishment and maintenance of peace at the global scale. If history is any indication, long-term peace and stability, as the very prerequisites of social development, can be achieved only through tolerance and understanding among all societies, cultures and peoples. The belief that dialogue among civilizations, as proposed by President Khatami and endorsed by the General Assembly, premised on the central notion of cultural diversity, constitutes the appropriate framework for reaching such an understanding.

The Chairman: I thank the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Isaias Rodriguez, Vice-President of the Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Rodríguez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The times in which we live demand a new form of social expression, in which the individual is both the subject and the object of development, and in which security assumes its proper dimension, not through the use of force or weapons, but through the eradication of poverty, discrimination, human rights violations, inequality and unemployment.

Poverty, marginalization and weaknesses in the health, education and judicial administration systems emphasize the deep-rooted social inequalities that hinder the development and growth of our peoples. These are the major challenges that Governments must

meet in order to contribute to resolving the major social problems we face as countries individually and as the international community as a whole.

For that reason, we have come to this special session to reaffirm and renew our commitment to the objectives established five years ago at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

In this spirit, the national Government of Venezuela considers the individual, as both the subject and the object of development, to be the fundamental component of our social policy. Our commitment is to poverty eradication, education, health care and the creation of productive employment. The quest for social development is not only geared towards correcting the existing distortions in our societies, clearly evident in marginalization and social injustice. It is also directed at the full development of citizens in aspects related to the exercise of democracy.

The participation of the population in matters concerning them is a basic component in the building of a real democracy that seeks prosperity for all, without disregarding the most vulnerable groups in the process. For the Republic of Venezuela, participative democracy is one of the four cardinal points and, at the same time, the culmination of social development.

All this government activity is included in the country's new political plan, which entered into force with the adoption of the new Constitution of Venezuela. The Constitution addresses the rights inherent to social development and provides guarantees for full multi-ethnic and gender equality. It states, in article 3,

> "The essential goals of the State are the defence and the development of the individual and full respect for his or her dignity; the democratic exercise of popular will; the construction of a just and peace-loving society; the promotion of the prosperity and well-being of the people; and the guarantee of the fulfilment of the principles, rights and duties set forth in this Constitution. Education and employment are the fundamental processes for achieving these objectives."

In this context, the Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías has favoured a change in relations between the State and the population to enable a greater level of participation by civil society organizations and the transfer of financial resources to local communities.

Thus, we envisage the creation of a regional, municipal and local social network to strengthen and ensure coordination and management in the social domain, geared towards the prompt implementation of a series of measures to restore the basic human rights of the sectors of the population subject to the greatest degree of social exclusion: families in a state of extreme poverty, indigence, abandonment, social risk and people who do not benefit from the existing social support networks, including children, adolescents, immigrants and female heads of household in urban, rural, border and indigenous areas.

Within this support framework, we have designed projects to complement social priority policies in Venezuela, including the national system for beneficiary selection, conceived as a system to direct resources to the more vulnerable households and families through flexible, modern, transparent and decentralized mechanisms, and the system to follow up and evaluate social policies and programmes, in order to strengthen, by systematizing the follow-up and evaluation process, the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies.

Bearing in mind the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, the Government has adopted a set of actions and measures, among them a body of laws designed to provide for the full protection of children and adolescents, to guarantee equal opportunity for women and to regulate the health subsystem and the pension system.

Programmes have also been created and implemented to meet the specific needs of various groups of society. These include the comprehensive network for the protection of children and adolescents, the abandoned minors and minors-at-risk care network, the youth training, employment and vocational training programme and the child and adolescent protection and social rehabilitation programme.

We have also created programmes to help the lowest income groups, which offer services and products at affordable prices. Examples include the unified savings programme and the projects for cooperative supply centres, a programme to foster and support the establishment of microenterprises, a programme to strengthen the in-patient network by establishing comprehensive treatment, a programme to

strengthen control of endemic epidemics, a programme to foster and support citizens' participation in health-care management and support programmes for private and public/private organizations, such as Hogares CREA, a bone-marrow transplant foundation.

In spite of the efforts our Government has been making, debt servicing in Venezuela continues to eat into resources that could otherwise be used for programmes to eradicate poverty and to create productive employment. This heavy burden has to a great extent restricted our ability to promote social development.

Venezuela has met, and is meeting, its commitments in servicing its debt, and it has been bearing the enormous social cost that this involves. We hope that the international community will adopt measures that will make it possible to find a solution to the debt problem and the debt-servicing burden for developing countries.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that we need to have a stronger international financial system, one that is more stable, more democratic and more transparent, one that will help us tackle in a more timely and effective manner the new development challenges that face us as world financial systems become more integrated. Otherwise, financial and economic vulnerabilities will persist, as will technological and social marginalization, a solution to which is essential for social development that will promote the real growth our peoples want so much.

There is no doubt that we live in an increasingly interdependent world where changes are being brought about by technological innovation in the setting of an accelerated process of globalization. In this regard, we must not lose sight of what should be the essential targets of this process: human beings, their well-being, their development, their participation in matters that concern them.

Globalization should further social equilibrium; it should not deepen social inequalities. It is an ongoing process with both advantages and disadvantages. Many of the developing countries have, unfortunately, missed out on the advantages of globalization, yet the developing countries have also had to deal with the disadvantages accompanying globalization, which have left these countries' vulnerabilities even more exposed. This is why we must, as a matter of urgency, seek alternatives that will help us to correct the negative effects created by globalization so that its benefits reach all countries in the world and all members of society.

As a result of the climatic phenomenon that hit my country in December 1999, causing floods that left approximately 50,000 people dead, and many thousands otherwise seriously affected, a series of programmes were developed to tackle the emergency situation. These have been effective, although many of them are temporary. Nevertheless, this situation was a serious setback to the efforts we had been making to promote social development, not only in the areas directly affected but throughout the country. Assistance by the international community to Venezuela at a time of such great suffering was, and continues to be, highly appreciated by all Venezuelans.

We cannot continue to disregard the fundamental role that social development should be playing in our agendas. Specifically, we need to enhance cooperation and the institutions dealing with social matters in order to achieve economic growth based on social harmony, a result of qualitative development.

This is an ongoing process that requires the adoption of appropriate policies and the resources necessary for their implementation, as well as constant assessment to ensure their effectiveness. In this connection I would like to highlight the role of the United Nations, not only as the setting for the initiative that led to a consensus on social development and its fundamental role in the well-being of our societies, but also as an instrument to follow up on the commitments made, in the belief that the fulfilment of those commitments will be a step forward towards peace, security, stability and justice.

The Republic of Venezuela would like to take this opportunity to reiterate here in this forum its commitment to the individual human being as the centre of our public policy and to the drawing up of strategies to achieve and consolidate progress and well-being for our peoples.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Venezuela for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Ntoutoume-Emane, Prime Minister of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ntoutoume-Emane (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, on behalf of El Hadj Omar

Bongo, President of the Republic and head of State, on behalf of his Government and the whole of the Gabonese people, it is my pleasure to extend to you our warm congratulations on your election to guide the work of this special session of the General Assembly. Being familiar with your great experience and the efficiency and skill with which you have conducted the work of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly, I can have no doubt that you will do everything to ensure that this special session will reach a successful outcome. I take this opportunity also to express my warm appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the vast amount of excellent work that has been done to prepare for this special session. Finally, in the same spirit, for the quality of the welcome extended to us, I would like to express my warm thanks to the Government and the people of Switzerland for their kind hospitality.

Five years ago, the Copenhagen Summit took place. For five years, therefore, we have been believing that the commitments made should be respected. But today we have to say in truth that, in view of what has been achieved as compared with the commitments assumed, the results are mixed. Since then, difficult times have been holding back the work of a number of Governments, among them those of the third world and, more particularly, those of Africa. This situation, which has struck my country, Gabon, with its full force and is compounded by our heavy indebtedness, has led us to turn to the Bretton Woods institutions. Together with them, the Government has defined priority objectives in its struggle against poverty, the main components of which are the struggle against unemployment, social integration, the promotion of women, access to high-quality education and good health care for all.

To ensure the social integration of the vulnerable sectors of its population, the Government has taken a number of actions. Our country is harmonizing its activities to ensure greater efficiency in this area of social policy. In keeping with a decree dating from January 1995 on health policies in Gabon, a national health plan was elaborated whose aim is to improve health-care coverage throughout our territory while giving priority to maternal and child health.

To ensure that our actions are fully successful, the Government is emphasizing the pivotal role of education in the process of the economic development of our country. That is why our national multisectoral programme, which focuses on information, education and communication and which is financed by the Government and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), should be pursued and developed.

Finally, to give as many people as possible access to electricity and drinking water, the Government has introduced a favourable tariff policy and is implementing a programme that will provide water to villages.

However, these actions are being carried out in a situation of economic crisis. In this respect, we wish to emphasize that today my country, Gabon, is the only intermediate-income country south of the Sahara and therefore is not eligible for support initiatives to combat poverty. This classification — which is based on parameters which, as everyone knows, are highly questionable — has placed us at a considerable disadvantage in terms of our social situation with respect to the ideals of solidarity and equity — the two cardinal values that guide the missions and activities of the United Nations.

However, the personal commitment of El Hadj Omar Bongo, our head of State, to ensure the gradual elimination of the main obstacles to human development and to the maintenance of social peace prompted Gabon to host an African summit on the African agenda, on 18 and 19 January last, under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which addressed the issues of economic growth and the reduction of poverty at the dawn of the third millennium.

That meeting allowed for a rich exchange of views and led to a reaffirmation by the heads of State and Government of the objective of combating poverty through sustained and durable economic growth.

We note with regret, however, that despite this determination — which, unfortunately, is undermined by a difficult economic context — a great deal remains to do to fully achieve the goals set at Copenhagen. Indeed, with respect to the objectives set out by the 20/20 Initiative, the budgetary allocations made in recent years to the social sectors are, although encouraging, still insufficient.

It is therefore vital to mobilize further resources to benefit these sectors so as to ensure that monies are

effectively spent and to provide the population optimum access to basic social services. In this respect, we wish to express our deep satisfaction at the support provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) since 1997 in the framework of the social planning project. This project will help to create a reliable data base and lead to a genuine reform in the sector through targeted and effective actions.

It is not hard, therefore, to understand the determination of my country to continue to work for social advancement, despite the major obstacle posed by the debt burden.

The debt problem must therefore be considered not only in terms of socio-economic indicators but also in the framework of a country's efforts to combat poverty. Let me emphatically recall that today the debt burden, like poverty itself — of which it is one of the main determining factors — represents a continuing threat to the political stability of our States.

It was in this spirit that Gabon, through its head of State, President Bongo, said at Copenhagen that only active solidarity among nations could give credibility to our work. The time has come finally to translate into reality the commitments undertaken with respect to official development assistance. The objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of the rich countries to that assistance has not been achieved. Indeed, we have even seen that trend reversed.

The far-reaching changes of all kinds that are taking place throughout the world are posing challenges that must be met in order to achieve a new order that is based mainly on competitiveness and the interdependence of nations. This will require concerted mobilization and ongoing awareness on the part of the international community.

I believe that this meeting will have achieved its aim if it can strengthen our common conviction that a harmonious future for our planet is an absolute necessity.

For its part, and within the means at is disposal, Gabon is working resolutely to continue to consolidate the gains it has made in the social arena, which have made it an island of political stability in the Central African subregion, and to strengthen international cooperation with a view to ensuring more equitable development for all of the peoples of the world.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Gabonese Republic.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of the Republic of Zambia.

President Chiluba: On behalf of the people of Zambia, I would like to join all the previous speakers in extending our very warm and hearty appreciation to the United Nations for facilitating this very important gathering, intended to focus world attention on the issues of social development.

This gathering offers us a rare window of opportunity to think afresh and create new strategies towards a new world community, free from poverty, hunger and social deprivation, because these are conditions well within humanity's means to eradicate, if given a sense of purpose and commitment.

This gathering should therefore seize this opportunity to deal comprehensively and decisively with the man-made inequalities prevailing in our global economic system and structures that have consigned millions of people to abject poverty and extreme privation, while a lucky few enjoy unparalleled affluence. Neither God nor nature has ordained this order. This is an order created by man through a deliberate process of commission and omission.

In 1995, the world gathered to formulate the Copenhagen commitments, which principally focused on eradicating poverty, seeking full and sustainable employment and ensuring social integration. Those principles are still as important today as they were then. However, in spite of the commitment made in Copenhagen, poverty continues to afflict the majority of people in developing countries. Unemployment and underemployment characterize our economic endeavours, especially in the informal sector.

The need for social inclusive development needs no emphasis. Good governance, the full participation of civil society and ensuring that political and legal frameworks are people-centred must be the cornerstones of our development efforts.

This review and appraisal are taking place against the background of declining terms of trade for most developing countries, especially in Africa, and dwindling inflows of concessional financial resources. This situation has a particularly devastating effect on Zambia. Zambia's ability to service its external debt

continues to decline, thus limiting the capacity to deliver on social development. Zambia is placed in an exceptionally difficult position geopolitically. We are exposed to sudden external shocks, such as regional conflicts, increases in international oil prices, declines in copper prices, harsh weather patterns and financial crises. We need to develop capacities in these areas to enable us to anticipate, prevent and offset negative social and economic consequences through effective national, regional and international strategies.

My country has accorded the eradication of poverty the highest priority. We have formulated a national poverty-reduction action plan together with our cooperating partners in civil society. But our efforts, however noble, will remain mere visions for as long as the underlying causes of the condition are not addressed. Poverty in Africa and many third world countries is not an accident. It is the result of a prolonged, systemic campaign of emasculation that has characterized our economic and political interaction. It is a relationship in which economic self-interest has overtaken reason and morality. It is a relationship devoid of compassion and empathy. Indeed, it is a relationship that builds on and reinforces inequality and poverty.

Development aid has failed to impact the areas of critical concern in the field of social mobilization and economic upliftment. Aid should ideally focus on enabling the people to develop capacities to implement development and social change. In addition, aid should ideally empower the poor to enter and participate effectively at the global level. This has not been the case. The status quo not only has been maintained, but continues to be reinforced.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me state that my country appreciates official development assistance given by our cooperating partners. We further appreciate the efforts being made towards the achievement of the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of developed countries being allocated to official development assistance.

While it is accepted, though, that a significant percentage of official development assistance should be directed towards Africa, it is the nature of this aid that needs to be reviewed. There is a need to rethink the philosophy of aid in order to create a support model that emphasizes capacity-building through the holistic enhancement of the economic, social and political capacities of new and emerging democracies that are confronted with crises of expectation that result in social crisis or, indeed, in total anarchy and national disintegration in some cases.

There is, indeed, no excuse for the instability that continues to plague the African continent, nor is there a rational explanation for its occurrence. Suffice it to observe that economic deprivation is a root of political instability.

Despite the difficulties that my country has faced in achieving the Copenhagen commitments, we in Zambia remain committed to the policy and principle of social development. Indeed, I recognize that internal factors have contributed to the low achievement in social development in Africa, but the world needs to focus more attention on ensuring that the external environment is pro-social development.

It is my hope and vision that this special session will provide a new impetus towards the elimination of obstacles that have prevented the full attainment of the cause of Copenhagen. It is not my intention to place blame on the international economic system, but merely to state possible areas of action for further initiatives to make Copenhagen a reality not only for us, but also for our children and their children after them.

My country has, in the past, had occasion to express the need for a just world order and international financial and trade institutions. We need to ensure that our world institutions focus on poverty eradication. If the instruments governing multilateral donor institutions have become a barrier to ensuring the social-development orientation of structural adjustment programmes, perhaps the international community could consider urgent and appropriate remedial action before these programmes become instruments for further impoverishment.

The debt overhang continues to plague many developing countries, especially in Africa. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative is a welcome Initiative. However, in the case of Zambia, it has been recognized that, for social development to take place, we need more than HIPC. We need to ease the conditions for HIPC accession, such as the length of completion, and also to consider complete debt cancellation. This will enable us effectively to contribute to our share of the implementation of the 20/20 initiative and ensure that resource mobilization

for social development is operationalized. This will no doubt enhance our capacity to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

The lack of wage employment continues to affect the poorest of the poor. Women and children have been affected the most, thus being driven into exploitative forms of work, including commercial sex, child labour and criminal activity. My Government considers the participation of persons from all areas of society to be critical in attaining sustainable development. Persons who are sight- and hearing-impaired, as well as the physically impaired and children, are challenged in extremely difficult circumstances. All need to be part of our development vision.

As a result of the marginalization of women and children in economic, social and political decision-making structures, my Government has been working closely with our cooperating partners and community-based and non-governmental organizations to socially integrate disadvantaged sections of our society. The challenge of social integration continues to occupy the Zambian people, but the vision to integrate is clear and moving towards fulfilment. My Government believes that, in order for sustainable human development to take place, people have to be empowered. Universal primary education and primary health care are key in this regard. My Government continues to ensure that basic social services are provided to all who need them. This is a long-term goal whose urgency needs no emphasis.

The issue of gender equity is paramount for any sustainable development process. Recognizing this, my Government has put in place a national gender policy with a view to mainstreaming gender issues, especially for disadvantaged women, in all our national development programmes. The coordination of all gender programming has been accorded high priority with the placement of the Gender in Development Division at the cabinet level. My Government continues to work towards the attainment of gender equity in the provision of basic social services and the distribution of income.

We are not here to renegotiate Copenhagen but to ensure the elimination of obstacles in its implementation through further initiatives. It is my sincere hope that this special session will refocus world attention on the pertinent issues that have impeded social development at the global level and also at individual country levels.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for his statement.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Astrid Fischel, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mrs. Fischel (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Costa Rica, and in particular on behalf of the President, Miguel Angel Rodriguez, I would like to express our warmest and most respectful greetings. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, to the Preparatory Committee and to the various working groups for the very arduous work they have done to produce what I must say is excellent basic documentation and to organize so very well this special session.

When President Rodriguez took over as President in May 1998 he emphasized his commitment to devoting his Government to human development, to working every day to ensure that Costa Rica progressed, to fighting for the kind of growth that would enable all Costa Rican men and women to achieve a higher level of well-being. In a nutshell, he committed himself to governing with the people and for the people. This vision of government has allowed for the elaboration of a development policy based on social objectives.

Inspired by the Copenhagen Summit, we have also been able to achieve very satisfactory economic growth rates. For example, in two years we have experienced growth of 15.6 per cent, our highest rate in the last 38 years. Our unemployment rates are also encouraging, the current rate being 5 per cent, with underemployment at 7 per cent.

Our employment policies have also been influenced by the major wave of immigration from other Central American countries, particularly from Nicaragua. Such immigrants now make up approximately 13 per cent of the total population of Costa Rica. This figure has increased as a result of the natural disasters that have affected the region in recent years, exerting considerable pressure not only on the labour market, but also on the health, education and public housing systems.

This year, Costa Rica celebrated with pride the fiftieth anniversary of Costa Rican women gaining the right to vote. The last significant reform in this regard was made in 1996, at which time we passed legislation making it mandatory to establish quotas for women on the party lists of candidates for Parliament and for local government. At present both of the Vice-Presidents of Costa Rica, the President of the Legislative Assembly, and the President of one of the two major political parties in Costa Rica are women.

In the last decade our country has developed new strategies to meet its social-development objectives and to tackle poverty head-on. This has enabled us in the last decade to reduce the number of families living in undignified conditions from 30 to 20 per cent. To a great extent this is due to our investment in the social sector, where approximately 18 per cent of our gross domestic product is invested.

During President Rodriguez's tenure, one of the most important steps we have taken is to draw up a solidarity plan. This plan is directed at combating poverty and includes, inter alia, the following important goals. First is the revision of our social programmes so as to identify possible areas of duplication and thus to promote institutional specialization. The second action is to revise the objectives and tools of the fund for social development and family allowances, which is financed by our own domestic resources in the amount of some $200 million per year.

Thirdly, we want to implement our objective population information system, which is a census of the potential recipients of social benefits. The purpose is to eliminate politicking and cronyism in the identification of who most needs the benefits. Fourthly, in the area of social policy, we are also implementing the equity in education programme which has enabled us to significantly reduce school drop-out and repetition rates. It has also enabled us to increase the availability of pre-school education and secondary education. Fifthly, as regards health, we are pleased to have achieved an overall mortality rate of 3.9 per thousand, an infant mortality rate of 11.7 per cent and a life expectancy at birth of 76.7 years.

Another important and innovative project of the current Administration is the strategy called the Solidarity Triangle. Its purpose is to build a society based on opportunity through improving living standards. We hope to achieve this by increasing the involvement of the population, with faith in the ability of each individual to be creative and to exercise freedom with responsibility. The Solidarity Triangle was designed as a means of promoting a culture of participation, through which the communities, local governments and national Government institutions can work together in making decisions and in taking actions that will continuously improve the living standards of all Costa Rican men and women.

Such actions have been taken as the result of the conjunction of two processes. One of these is involving and consulting the people, which turns them from passive beneficiaries of State assistance into active participants in their own development. The other process is strengthening local government and speeding up the process of decentralization, thus increasing local technical and economic capacities.

The Solidarity Triangle enables our citizens to become overseers of the implementation of projects at the local level: they ensure ethical behaviour on the part of the public authorities, and thus guarantee consistent accountability.

The Solidarity Triangle is a public policy that has been structured in such a way as to promote the development of all Costa Ricans and to attempt to consolidate efforts and aspirations to produce a more just society in both the economic and social areas, without discrimination with regard to gender, ethnicity, culture or age. In such a society the participation of citizens would be strengthened and political action, in the broadest sense of the term, would be established.

Our society's historical goals have not changed. Our hopes for shared growth, social solidarity and the progress of families are guiding themes of our national agenda. Costa Rica continues to be fundamentally and permanently committed to human development. The levels we have attained have been the result of many decades of effort made upon the foundations of deepening the democratic process, investment in education and health and the absence of a military for over 50 years. Our vision is neither unilateral nor isolationist. Rather, it forms part of the recognition of the fact that actions undertaken to achieve the highest social and economic objectives should be framed within the context of the development of the Central American region.

I would like to conclude by wishing the various working groups and the Bureau my country's best wishes for achieving the best results possible in the work begun today by the special session. Those results should make it possible to reach the ideal of a worthy life for everyone in all our countries.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica for her statement.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Valentina Matvienko, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

Mrs. Matvienko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to address such a high-level forum convened at the dawn of the new millennium to continue the dialogue on strategic priorities of social development, initiated in Copenhagen.

This special session of the General Assembly gives the international community yet another chance to learn the lessons of the unprecedented social and economic shocks of the twentieth century and to pave the way through joint efforts towards sustainable development and prosperity for humanity.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the results of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development clearly shows that we have not yet made a breakthrough in achieving its agenda. The radical changes in ways of life brought about by globalization do not provide remedies for old social problems, but instead create new risks and challenges. The threat of global disaster as a result of nuclear confrontation has been replaced by such abhorrent realities as transnational terrorism and organized crime, militant separatism and inter-ethnic division, illicit trafficking in arms and narcotic drugs and many other acute problems.

Not all countries have gained access to the achievements of scientific and technological progress. A limited number of countries, where the so-called golden billion of the world's population live, have reached a new level of prosperity. The majority of other States did not manage to reach a higher standard of living in the twentieth century and are only now approaching the frontiers of post-industrial society. The gap between the world's richest and poorest is widening.

To overcome this trend we must redesign the entire modern architecture of international relations. The social component must be more clearly reflected in the activities of international financial and economic organization. Our common goal is to make globalization a tool for enhancing social and economic progress so that all countries may enjoy its benefits. The United Nations should be a key element in achieving this goal. Russia stands for, and will continue to stand for, enhancing the role and strengthening the authority of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, including, inter alia, in the field of social and economic cooperation. We are convinced that social development issues should continue to be among the top priorities on the United Nations agenda in the years ahead.

Recently, countries with economies in transition have been having more and more influence on world developments. These countries are strongly determined to overcome the social costs of transition, to eradicate poverty, to achieve full employment and to strengthen social integration. However, their efforts have not yet met with an adequate response from the international community.

The comprehensive report of the Secretary-General gives a description of the deterioration of the socio-economic situation in Eastern and Central Europe and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), but it gives no answer to the question of what additional measures should be taken at the international level to prevent the social exclusion of millions of people in that region. Russia believes that it is high time to hold a large-scale, high-level regional conference under United Nations auspices to discuss the problems of social development in countries with economies in transition. Such a conference should focus on searching for new resources for these aims. This forum should be attended by representatives of United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and interested donors. Such a conference could be convened in Russia in 2002-2003. I hope that this initiative will receive a favourable response from all the participants of the special session, and especially from the leaders of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS who are present at this forum.

There are few countries that have suffered as many tragic developments in the twentieth century as

Russia. We are fully aware that Russia is no longer able to survive yet another social shock or radical restructuring. The Russian Government is now concluding the drafting of a long-term national development strategy aimed at overcoming the consequences of the recent crisis and at creating a favourable environment for effective social and economic growth. The new programme of social and economic reforms is scheduled for consideration at the next meeting of the cabinet, in which I plan to participate immediately upon my return to Moscow.

In drafting the new strategic course, the Russian authorities have taken due account of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen. By taking into consideration the decisions of the Social Summit, we have significantly increased the efficiency of social policy. As of now, the social protection of the population is target-oriented. State support is being provided precisely to those who are in need of it. In combating unemployment, priority is given to the development of active employment programmes aimed at adapting people to the demands of the labour market.

Russia possesses not only rich natural resources and great energy reserves; our main wealth is our invaluable human capital. That is why the Russian Government has made its top priority to increase the incomes and the standards of living of the Russian people and to ensure worthy living conditions. We must stabilize the political situation and ensure economic growth and financial development, which will make it possible to make progress.

Last year the salaries of teachers and doctors increased 150 per cent. Although we have of course not yet reached the proper levels, we are in a transitional stage and we will continue to increase budgetary allocations to develop the social protection, education, health and culture systems. The State budget for the year 2000 provides for significant increases in public social spending.

Yet another task of the Russian Government, closely connected with finding solutions for social development problems, is that of the continuous integration of the Russian economy into the world's economic structures. To achieve this goal, we will actively support Russian businessmen, strongly oppose discrimination against Russia in the world's commodity, services and investment markets and strive for access to the World Trade Organization.

To fully achieve the agenda of the Social Summit, all nations have to work together. Only by joining our efforts can we duly respond to the challenges of our time and find reasonable solutions for the global problems facing humanity. I believe that together we shall succeed in achieving the noble goal of making the twenty-first century an era of social partnership and economic prosperity.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, Minister of Labour and Solidarity of Portugal.

Mr. Ferro Rodrigues (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — the associated countries, Cyprus and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association country, Iceland, have expressed the wish to align themselves with this statement.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Division for Social Policy and Development for the excellent preparatory work undertaken before this special session, as well as to the Chairmen of the Preparatory Committee and of all the working groups for their untiring efforts in the negotiating process. A word of gratitude is also deserved by the Swiss Government for hosting this special session.

Five years ago at the World Summit for Social Development, heads of State or Government committed themselves and their countries to the principle of a society for all, placing the human being at the centre of development. The principle remains valid even if in the last five years the world has faced a number of new challenges with an impact on social development. Globalization, economic crises and an evolving, new economic order all require rapid solutions.

The review and appraisal of the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments since 1995 have shown that some progress has been achieved; however, it has been uneven, and further initiatives are required. We welcome the increasingly widespread recognition, including by the international financial institutions, of the critical importance of full implementation of the Copenhagen commitments for achieving the international development targets.

In the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, to which the European Union is deeply committed, it was recognized in paragraph 8 that

> "Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing."

The creation of a political, legal and economic environment that will enable people to achieve social development is of paramount importance. Sustainable social development can take place only within a political environment of good governance.

The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 designated a new strategic goal for the European Union in the next decade: to become a more competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The achievement of this goal requires an overall strategy to regain the conditions for full, productive and dignified employment.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union wishes to take the opportunity to briefly underline some of the key issues for the future and to reinforce the need for coordinated follow-up of the relevant United Nations conferences and summits of the last decade, particularly of the very recent General Assembly special session entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

The European Union wishes to stress the fundamental contribution of women to social development and their essential role for poverty eradication. The Beijing Platform for Action, supplemented by the initiatives agreed at the above-mentioned special session, together with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, remains the cornerstone in the pursuit of gender equality. Gender equality is a men's as well as a women's responsibility. States must shoulder their obligation to end discrimination and violence against women and to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We reiterate our commitment to halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015; this must remain an overarching target of the global community, and we warmly welcome the fact that this special session will formally endorse it.

The respect, promotion and realization of the principles contained in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up are a fundamental prerequisite for social and economic development. Universal ratification and full implementation of the ILO core conventions concerning basic workers' rights are therefore of the utmost importance. The European Union considers the achievement of the goal of full employment and decent work for all a basic priority for poverty eradication and social inclusion.

The international community needs to identify those key aspects of social policy that underpin economic development in a globalizing world and to begin to develop a framework of social principles to ensure that the goals of Copenhagen are integrated into national and international policy-making.

Inclusive societies, based on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunities, solidarity and participation of all members, should ensure universal access to basic social services and specific protection measures for disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and groups.

Investment in education and health produces better socio-economic results that any other investment. The recent Framework for Action for Education for All, adopted in Dakar, has established goals to which the European Union is fully committed. It is also committed to lifelong learning as an essential tool for facing the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Health promotion and disease prevention require the improved performance of health-care systems, particularly in fighting easily preventable epidemic diseases such as polio and measles, and epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as malaria and tuberculosis; in providing information and services for sexual and reproductive health; and in making available essential medicines.

The significant increase and more efficient utilization of the resources allocated to social development require renewed national and international efforts. The European Union is committed

to the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. Its member States will continue to strive to attain that target, which has already been reached by some members. Recognizing the social impact of the debt burden for many countries, the European Union will strive to ensure the full and speedy implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. Debt relief measures should make available more local resources for poverty reduction and productive purposes. Concerted national and international efforts to facilitate the integration of Africa and the least developed countries into the global economy and to promote their participation in the multilateral trading system need to be reinforced in the coming years.

In order to monitor, evaluate and measure what we have achieved and what is yet to be achieved, we need to consolidate a coherent set of generally accepted indicators at national and international levels. The relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, especially the United Nations Development Programme, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international organizations, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, should further support efforts to draw up relevant social development indicators. In this context, the Lisbon European Council reaffirmed the need to further develop quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks in the fields of employment and social protection.

While recognizing the primary responsibility of Governments in promoting social development, the European Union considers that the participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and other actors, in a broad-based dialogue is a fundamental tool for the full achievement of the Copenhagen goals. The European Union also stresses the importance of the corporate responsibility of the private sector in the implementation of these goals. The European Union is pleased to acknowledge that since 1995 dialogue has been established between civil society and the United Nations organizations, as well as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The European Union remains strongly committed to the Copenhagen Programme of Action, as it still provides solid ground for national and international policies, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of people-centred sustainable development for a more just and stable world. However, its implementation needs to be strengthened and must be more results-oriented.

This is our challenge at this special session and beyond.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Mozammel Hossain, State Minister for Social Welfare of Bangladesh.

Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh): May I begin, Mr. President, by reaffirming that we have every confidence in your ability to lead our deliberations to success.

The Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had a vision of a Golden Bengal where every citizen lived in dignity, free from the scourges of poverty, illiteracy, homelessness and hunger. We continue to be inspired by his vision in our efforts to uphold the basic rights of our people in the face of daunting challenges. Our present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, places high priority upon social development. While I shall share part of our experience with the Assembly, the rest is contained in the Bangladesh country paper that is being circulated.

As a follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, a national Plan of Action within the framework of the country's fifth five-year plan was adopted. A National Committee, comprising representatives of relevant ministries of the Government, as well as of civil society, was established in 1996 to implement the national Plan of Action. Specific time-bound programmes were adopted to implement the Summit goals. Bangladesh has, in fact, gone beyond fulfilment of the 20/20 initiative. About 40 per cent of the total allocation of resources of the annual development programme is now devoted to social sectors.

We have made poverty eradication, expansion of productive employment and social integration our focused priority. Almost 42 per cent of the total allocation of the current annual development programmed is devoted to agriculture, rural development, social welfare, youth development, primary education and health sectors. Anti-poverty programmes include the Ashrayan, which are projects for the homeless, the Vulnerable Group Development Programme, food for work, food for education, special projects for the disabled and allowances for distressed widows and the aged.

The success of the microcredit programme in Bangladesh is well known. The programme is not only geared towards poverty eradication, but it also has a significant impact on the empowerment of women in Bangladesh. The Microcredit Summit, which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Washington in February 1997, recognized microcredit as a key strategy for achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development. The Summit endorsed a global campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families with credit for self-employment by the year 2005.

Bangladesh has been espousing the cause of social development in all major international forums, including at the recently held General Assembly special session on Beijing+5. At the regional level, Bangladesh is also actively committed to the objectives of the Dhaka Declaration for poverty eradication, adopted by the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, aimed at eradicating poverty from South Asia, preferably by 2002.

We have placed special emphasis on the generation of productive employment. A comprehensive employment strategy has been included in our fifth five-year plan.

Social integration is a constitutional commitment for Bangladesh. Particular emphasis is given to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of society. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, which brought an end to decades-long insurgency, has also paved the way for greater integration of the tribal population in the national mainstream.

It is yet too early to draw absolute conclusions about the effect of the World Summit for Social Development follow-up actions on the socio-economic indicators of Bangladesh. However, there is enough evidence to indicate that increased allocation in the social sector has contributed significantly to the attainment of the Summit goals. To give some examples, our population growth rate dropped from 1.81 per cent in 1995 to 1.5 per cent in 1998; adult literacy increased to 58 per cent in 1998 from 43.2 per cent in 1995; and 44.7 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line in 1999, compared to more than 47.9 per cent in 1996.

The creation of an enabling environment for social development cannot be achieved successfully without the collective commitment of the international community. The Copenhagen Summit made a specific commitment for strengthening international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development.

There has not been much progress in fulfilling the agreed target of earmarking 0.15 per cent to 0.2 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance for the least developed countries. Most least developed countries continue to confront problems of access to markets, decline in foreign direct investment and technology transfer. Unless urgent steps are taken, the goals of social development will remain elusive for most least developed countries.

Encouraging though some achievements may appear, much more remains to be done. As we identify new initiatives at the special session we would like to recommend the following.

First, the Economic and Social Council, as the body primarily responsible for coordinating international efforts in the follow-up to the United Nations conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development, needs to be further strengthened and made more effective through fostering a closer working relationship with its subsidiary bodies and the United Nations funds and programmes, as well as with the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

Secondly, it is essential to have regular interaction among the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and United Nations Member States to establish effective partnership for social development.

Thirdly, commitments must be renewed, including through adequate resource mobilization and allocation and transfer of technology, to achieve the Summit goals for developing countries, particularly for the least developed countries.

Fourthly, official development assistance targets must be fulfilled, with special attention to the least developed countries and to effective implementation of the 20/20 initiative aimed at ensuring increased resources for social development.

Fifth, a globalization fund should be set up to finance the social development programmes to address the problems arising out of globalization.

The Copenhagen Summit placed social development at the centre of the global political

agenda, and it is our firm conviction that, given the necessary political will and our collective efforts, we should be able to achieve the goals of social development and establish a more just, peaceful and prosperous social order in the new millennium.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Jaime Ruiz, Special Adviser to the President of Colombia for Political Affairs.

Mr. Ruiz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to express special thanks for the work that has been done by the working groups and by the Preparatory Committee in order to lay the foundations for this magnificent session.

Any analysis of the efforts Colombia has been making in order to create better living standards for its citizens must first consider the situation of violence stemming from a long internal conflict and, in addition, the explosion of drug-trafficking, which has seriously impaired the country's development.

This reality has led to a vicious circle in which violence has been a constant obstacle to society's finding a sustainable path to development. Probably a new conceptual framework is needed to define, or redefine and evaluate, social development in such circumstances. Of course Colombia is not the only country that has been seriously affected by the worldwide problem of drugs, which has become an illegal business involving billions of dollars that has very serious destabilizing effects on the democracies of countries with smaller economies.

Despite having been forced to face the complex situation that has arisen as a result of this violence, the State of Colombia has over the last few decades been making important efforts to boost its investment in social issues. For example, social expenditure increased from less than 5 per cent of gross domestic product in the 1960s, to 9 per cent in 1990, and to 15.6 per cent in 1996. In other words, social expenditure in Colombia increased fivefold in real terms during the last three decades. We have promoted, in order of priority, education, health, clean drinking water, basic sanitation and housing.

This effort has been reflected in the continuous improvement shown by the traditional indicators of economic and social development: infant mortality dropped from 90 to less than 30 per thousand births for infants under the age of one, while in education, the illiteracy rate decreased from 19 per cent to 10 per cent.

Poverty indicators also showed positive results: between 1985 and 1997, the index of unmet basic needs decreased from 45 per cent to 26 per cent, and that of people living in extreme poverty fell from 22 per cent to 8.6 per cent. However, the progress that is being made on social issues has been stagnant since 1996, inter alia, because of the increasingly serious armed conflict involving drug-trafficking. Uncertainty has meant that investment has dropped to historically low levels, and, consequently, in 1999, for the first time in 60 years, our country had a negative growth rate, and the unemployment rate reached 20 per cent.

Violence and drug-trafficking have become the main obstacles to making further headway on social development. Drug-trafficking has inflicted severe economic and social costs on Colombia. Our country has been forced to spend about $1 billion per year on activities linked to fighting drug-trafficking. There is no doubt that these resources should be used to increase social expenditure.

Illicit crops have had a negative impact on people living in rural areas and on the ecosystems in the environmentally fragile areas such as the Amazon forests. According to estimates, for each hectare sown with an illicit crop such as coca, four hectares of rainforest are destroyed in the Amazon region. This means that in the last 15 years in Colombia, approximately 1 million hectares of forest have been destroyed. At the same time, people living in rural areas involved in such illegal activities have not experienced an improvement of their living standards. Their situation contrasts sharply with the enrichment of the intermediaries and drug-traffickers on the world drug scene.

The conflict in Colombia is therefore a unique conflict requiring unique solutions. The Colombian Government is currently trying to find solutions on three fronts simultaneously. First, it is working to reach a negotiated political solution to its internal conflict, accompanied by a commitment to defend and promote human rights.

Secondly, it is fighting drug-trafficking and its effects, since that phenomenon is for us today public enemy number one and poses a very serious threat to peace-building in Colombia.

Thirdly, we are investing in social issues and in humanitarian assistance, particularly in those rural areas most seriously affected by violence. We hope that this will promote development and help those areas' inhabitants break the cycle of economic dependence on illegal crops. These are major investments which are essential for rebuilding the human, physical, natural and social capital of the country.

All of this action is part of an ambitious plan called "Plan Colombia", which we have already presented to the international community. It is primarily a social plan, as 75 per cent of its resources will be spent on social issues. The goal is to create conditions conducive to advancing the peace process and making it sustainable over the long term.

Colombia, along with only a few other countries, has shouldered almost the entire considerable weight of fighting drug-trafficking, although it is an international problem that is fuelled by the demand for illegal drugs in developed nations. We trust that in future we will see a greater observance of the principle of shared responsibility, and that with the support of the international community, Colombia will be able to overcome the main obstacles that are limiting our development and preventing us from improving social conditions for our people.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Martine Aubry, Minister of Employment and Solidarity of France.

Mrs. Aubry (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me say how happy I am to welcome all present.

Our efforts here — five years after the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen — must measure up to the actions taken in that forum. I wish to express here France's hope and conviction that this will be the case.

The Copenhagen Summit was indeed a milestone. If we recall the thinking that prevailed at that time about globalization, we can see that the 1995 Summit prompted a clear shift, resulting in a broad and unprecedented commitment on the part of States and international institutions to combat poverty, and, at the highest political level, giving real meaning to the values underlying social development.

Allow me to touch on the objectives in question.

First, respect for human rights and the effective exercise of all rights — political, civil, economic, social and cultural — must be seen not only as an ethical requirement but also as an element of economic and social development.

Secondly, as the Copenhagen Summit reminded us, inequalities between States and within States, as well as the fight against poverty, require that, at the state level, internal regulatory or corrective intervention in market mechanisms be taken. At the international level, there must be increased solidarity among nations, rich and poor.

The implementation of these objectives requires in particular a partnership with civil society as well as social dialogue. In this respect, in France we have set up a national committee to follow up Copenhagen that includes all of the country's active forces — employer organizations, unions and non-governmental organizations — an original initiative that is in keeping with the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen.

Let us be frank: the outcome of Copenhagen has both positive and negative aspects. Alarmingly, inequities have worsened, not only among States but also within them. The value of this special session lies in the fact that it exposes this reality and allows us to draw the necessary lessons for the future.

France is convinced that we must reaffirm our collective political will to implement and deepen our commitment to the values espoused at the Copenhagen Summit. In this respect, I strongly support the statement made by my Portuguese colleague, who spoke on behalf of the European Union. I take this opportunity to emphasize the outstanding work of the Portuguese presidency of the European Union and its concern for building bridges between North and South. The future French presidency of the European Union will follow in its footsteps.

I welcome also the joint political statement of the French-speaking countries, which expresses our shared concern to fight inequalities, particularly among countries of the North and those of the South.

On the occasion of the renewal of the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen, I should like to stress my country's desire to see progress in four areas.

The first area is that of poverty and marginalization. We must devise far-reaching national

strategies and promote them at the European level. We must give priority to development assistance and to the implementation of the social objectives of United Nations conferences. The eradication of poverty and the fight against inequality must be priority items on the agenda of international cooperation for development. The right to development, of which the individual should be the main beneficiary, requires strong support on the part of the international community.

Secondly, progress must be made in the promotion and effective implementation of human rights and of economic, social and cultural rights. For instance, we must make headway in the implementation of the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Coordinated cooperation programmes will be needed, and multilateral institutions must respect the rights of workers. But these actions must not prompt the wealthier countries to impose a kind of protectionism in disguise. This summit will be a test in this respect.

Thirdly, we must implement rapidly and in full the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, which is due in great part to the Copenhagen Summit. Beyond that, we will have to reflect on ways of preventing the accumulation of excessive debt by developing countries. We must take practical measures in order to achieve a more socially aware management of structural adjustment programmes, an area in which we have made insufficient progress.

Finally, there is an urgent need to elaborate a strategy for the least developed countries, particularly in Africa, on the occasion of the upcoming United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. All aspects of development are involved. Priority must be given to basic social services, inter alia, education and health — two major sectors. France will also work with determination to intensify the fight against major pandemics and to give the poorest countries access to drugs. Emphasis must be placed on the prevention and treatment of AIDS in all of its dimensions, and here again we must make progress in respect to access by the poorest countries to appropriate care. This will require, among other things, strengthened and systematized cooperation among the United Nations agencies and the pharmaceutical companies.

Interesting information and bold initiatives on all of these points can be found in the documents that have been submitted to the Assembly. I hope that we will find them also in the conclusions of the summit. We cannot fail, as our credibility and that of the United Nations is at stake.

I remain confident, however, in the knowledge that decisive progress can be made in the home stretch, as was largely the case at Copenhagen.

I should like to conclude by quoting from the statement made before the Assembly by the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, in September 1999:

> "Faced with globalization, we have a choice to make. We can either go along with the supposedly universal economic laws, and in so doing abdicate our political responsibilities, or we can seek to impose order on globalization and thereby achieve control of our collective future...This world needs rules. It needs the United Nations." (*A/54/PV.4, p.29*)

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mrs. Anne Konaté, Minister of Finance and Economy of Burkina Faso.

Mrs. Konaté (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I am especially pleased, on behalf of the delegation of Burkina Faso, to address to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this special session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to take this opportunity to fulfil the pleasant duty of thanking the Government and people of Switzerland for everything they have done to facilitate our work. I also wish to thank the Secretariat for the high quality of the documents it has provided and for its overall preparatory work.

This special session, entitled "World Summit for Social Development: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", is being held at a time when the international scene, particularly in Africa, is still prey to multiple scourges. Just as remarkable progress is being made by the international community, particularly in science and technology, almost 1.5 billion people — one person in four — are still living on less than $1 a day.

With this in mind, the World Summit for Social Development, held from 6 to 12 March 1995 in Copenhagen, considered the fraught issues of poverty,

unemployment and social disintegration. It resulted in the adoption of a Declaration and Programme of Action urging Governments to focus development on the individual and to develop a spirit of cooperation and partnership in response to the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of society.

Five years after the Summit, we are compelled to recognize that some progress has certainly been made, but that much remains to be done. It is clear that poverty has not been reduced and that it has even increased in some places. Thus, additional action needs to be taken if we are to attain the objectives set in Copenhagen.

Africa has reviewed its progress towards social development. Under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, three subregional conferences have been held, respectively, in Nairobi for East and southern Africa; in Marrakesh for North Africa; and in Ouagadougou for West and Central Africa.

Generally speaking, macroeconomic indicators are positive. Indeed, gross domestic product has increased steadily, from 2.9 per cent growth in 1997 to 3.3 per cent in 1999. The figures for the latter two subregions I mentioned are 3.6 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively. Individually, 31 countries out of 53 achieved growth rates higher than their rates of population growth, which has enabled them to increase their per capita income. Of those 31 countries, 13 have seen their gross domestic product increase by at least 5 per cent, the threshold required for sustainable poverty reduction.

Burkina Faso is part of that optimistic picture. In the social sector, we have made considerable progress. In basic education, a priority for my country, the rate of enrolment rose from 35.7 per cent in 1995 to 41 per cent in 1999, and new approaches are being tested. Literacy has increased modestly from 22.2 per cent in 1994 to 24 per cent in 1998. With respect to health, the rate of infant and child mortality fell from 164 per thousand in 1995 to 158 per thousand in 1996. The infant mortality rate dropped from 86 to 82 per thousand in the same period.

While these few statistics are cause for cautious optimism, we remain convinced that the task ahead is enormous. Burkina Faso reiterates its will and commitment to implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and, to that end, urges all its development partners to release additional resources for sustainable development.

These days, three additional phenomena — conflicts, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and environmental degradation — are exacerbating and spreading poverty throughout the world. These three phenomena, individually and in conjunction, have pushed millions of people back below the poverty line in the past 15 years by eroding their resources and destroying their environment.

In this context, poverty eradication will be an increasingly important challenge in the years to come, especially in the regions worst affected, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty is one of the major scourges of that region, both because of its scope and growth and because of its serious threat to social, political and economic stability, as recently stressed by the former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Michel Camdessus, when he said: "Peace and development are based on rapid and convincing progress in poverty reduction".

The principal features of poverty in Africa are meagre levels of economic growth, significant imbalance in income and ownership of the methods of production, and lack of access to basic services, which lead in turn to a low rate of human resource development and inadequate agricultural production.

In many African countries, economic performance has considerably improved since the mid-1990s and the increase in average per capita gross domestic product has accelerated throughout the continent. Our growth remains fragile, however, and insufficient to stem the spread of poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa, where 50 per cent of the population lives in absolute poverty — as opposed to 20 per cent in North Africa — the problem is critical.

Moreover, while the situation of women has considerably improved over the past 40 years, thanks in particular to such international instruments as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a wide gap remains between promises and action when it comes to pursuing this progress in Africa.

Economic and legal obstacles to African women and the discrimination to which they are subject in society limit the impact of policies drafted and actions

taken to improve their situation, increase their productivity and allow them to develop to the full. In this respect, I would cite the paucity of investment in education and health care for women; their lack of access to services and consumer goods; and the legal and regulatory obstacles limiting their opportunities and preventing them from contributing fully to the continent's development.

In the new context of globalization and liberalization, Africa is the most subdivided of all the continents, with 165 borders dividing the region into 51 countries, 22 of which have fewer than 5 million inhabitants and 11 of which have less than 1 million. Thus, the continent faces very substantial problems of supply and demand. That is why, without regional cooperation, no African country can compete in the world's markets.

It was with this in mind that the three subregional conferences were held to help Governments adjust their policies so as to improve and consolidate the results they have already achieved and to draw up a common vision for Africa. As I mentioned earlier, Burkina Faso hosted one of these conferences last September to demonstrate its commitment to the development of the continent and to the solidarity of its peoples. The outcome of its work was the adoption of the Ouagadougou Declaration, which recommended, inter alia, the undertaking of structural economic reforms to support growth, encourage local savings and boost investment in the private sector; the promotion of dialogue and cooperation between all parties working for poverty reduction; the implementation of the 20/20 initiative and the establishment of a system to monitor the completeness rates of allocated credit and to create follow-up committees in those countries that do not yet have them; and the strengthening of capacity to absorb the principles and practices of democracy and good governance.

One of the major constraints Africa faces — and this cannot be repeated often enough — is the lack of financial resources. Many developing countries have not yet reached the target of 20 per cent set as part of the 20/20 initiative, because they are still spending most of their available resources to service their external debt. In this regard, debt relief would release resources to be spent on the social sector. As far as official development assistance is concerned, the situation remains worrisome, and each year the assistance totals decline yet more steadily.

The total amount of official development assistance provided by the countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1997 was approximately 0.22 per cent of these countries' gross national product. Only four countries have kept their promises to increase their level of aid above the 0.7 per cent of gross national product proposed by international consensus. If every country had kept its promise, the resources thus mobilized would have been sufficient to eradicate extreme poverty.

Faced with resource problems, several countries have tried to deal with the problem of creating health and education systems by asking the users to make a financial contribution or by introducing some kind of cost-sharing programme. However, fairness suffers as a result of this, because the poor do not have access to these services, as they cannot even pay for the essential minimum of services, even at reduced cost.

At the dawn of the new millennium, we hope that Africa will be able to pull itself out of the crisis conditions that since independence have often been its daily lot. The Africa of tomorrow is beginning to show itself as a continent that can stand proudly alongside its trade partners from the rest of the world and that will enjoy sustainable development, a continent where within 30 years all will have access to health care, there will be universal education, stability will be a human right and all types of poverty will have been swept aside.

This vision of an African renaissance is not a mirage. Many countries have made encouraging and visible progress in reforming their economies and in establishing structures and development policies that will allow them to increase equity and roll back poverty.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maj-Inger Klingvall, Minister for Development Cooperation, Migration and Asylum Policy of Sweden.

Ms. Klingvall (Sweden):

> "Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair."

This is how poverty is described by one of the voices cited in *Voices of the Poor*, a recent World Bank study. These words highlight the fact that poverty and

exclusion mean not just a lack of material resources. They also mean a lack of rights, knowledge, influence and health, which may differently affect various groups in society. Poverty is a lack of power, which, in turn, is a matter of democracy.

Poverty reduction requires investments that can empower people to work for a better life for themselves, their families and their societies. It requires integration between economic and social policy, based on an inclusive strategy, that encompasses each and everyone.

Human rights are universal. This requires that rights-based policies should be applicable to all individuals. The conventions on human rights clearly establish that Governments have a responsibility to guarantee civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights, to every member of their societies. In this context, I would like to underline the importance of recognizing the rights of the child and of fulfilling the provisions set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. National policies and strategies must target the whole population.

If poverty and social exclusion are to be tackled, we must see the linkage between political, economic, environmental and social development. This requires a strong partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations and other actors in the international community. The United Nations plays a key role in this context. This is clearly expressed in the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit. Individuals, as well as Governments, expect the United Nations to take a more active lead in the fight against poverty.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was a ground-breaking event. For the first time in history, world leaders explored the interlinkage between social development and economic growth. We know that progress has been made since Copenhagen. The Summit has inspired the world community to place poverty reduction at the top of its agenda. We must confirm at this session that our joint target should be to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half by the year 2015. We should also agree on how to reach the other global development targets.

This requires renewed efforts. Since Copenhagen we have also seen back-lashes, in particular in areas where armed conflicts and HIV/AIDS have had devastating effects. Further action must be taken. International cooperation must be strengthened. I will here highlight some important areas.

First, countries with more advanced economies must take the target 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance seriously. Progress must be made towards reaching this goal. I am glad to say that for the coming years Sweden will be able to further increase its allocations to 0.8 per cent, with the aim of again reaching 1 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. In addition to increasing the volume of aid, Sweden has launched a major review and evaluation of our development cooperation policy.

Secondly, we must alleviate the heavy burden of debts facing developing countries. An important instrument to this end is the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Sweden has been a strong supporter of the HIPC Initiative since it was launched in 1996. Together with our Nordic friends and the Netherlands and Switzerland we have delivered substantially more than half of the paid-in contributions to the fund. HIPC requires sustained efforts over several years. Broad participation and fair burden-sharing are essential.

Furthermore, we must improve the working conditions for workers all over the world. With regard to employment and labour, the Social Summit identified certain core labour standards to be applied all over the world, regardless of level of development. This paved the way for the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which will become a milestone for human rights at work, for development and for social justice. I hope that during this session we will be able to reconfirm our unreserved support for the Declaration and send a message to all international organizations to be active in the protection of human rights of workers all over the world.

Finally, there is the issue of equality between women and men. The General Assembly special session on women, held in early June, at which I myself participated, noted both achievements and obstacles in its review. That session, Beijing+5, adopted action-oriented documents with a clear gender perspective and a strong recognition of the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty

eradication. These must be crucial elements for us here in setting a framework for social development.

In concluding, poverty eradication requires political will and commitment. An even distribution of growing wealth is a fundamental tool to establish a more fair and equal society. We should commit ourselves to a comprehensive strategy which includes full employment, a fair distribution of resources and a social policy where services and programmes reach the whole population. These are key elements in a national, as well as an international, policy for sustainable development.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Krishna Chandra Pant, Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India.

Mr. Pant (India): The Social Summit held in Copenhagen in 1995 made a commitment to improve the quality of life of people in all regions of the world. For developing countries, which accepted the goals of the Summit by consensus, international support was considered crucial. A review of the progress in the last five years indicates that the goals set out in the Copenhagen Programme of Action have been only partially achieved. We are now considering new initiatives to ensure attainment of these objectives. In his report to the Millennium Summit, the Secretary-General has also challenged our leaders to agree to a set of tasks and objectives which draw on the commitments of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

We also have to achieve our goals in the specific context of globalization. The challenge is how to secure the benefits of globalization, particularly for vulnerable societies, and safeguard social systems.

We agree with Professor Amartya Sen, as all democratic Governments will, that development is the process of expanding human freedoms, and the assessment of development has to be informed by this consideration. At this special session, in this international setting, we should focus on areas where progress will be impossible without international support and action.

I will refer briefly to some areas where international cooperation will be critical to our success. The first is the eradication of poverty, Commitment 2 in the Programme of Action, which is crucial to social development. The World Health Organization (WHO) has listed extreme poverty in its International Classification of Diseases, reminding us that over 1 billion people have entered the twenty-first century "with their lives cut short or scarred by this ruthless disease". Without sustained growth, poverty will not be reduced, let alone eradicated. Nationally, several countries have formulated their own strategies for poverty eradication. Broadly, the strategy is a three-pronged one: one, economic growth; two, direct State intervention through programmes of poverty alleviation; and three, investment in human capital. In most developing countries, including India, agriculture and allied activities are the primary source of livelihood for the majority of their population. Therefore, investment in these sectors through development of appropriate technologies will generate both higher levels of output and greater employment. Support also needs to be extended to microenterprises and village and small industries, as the scope for stepping up organized sector employment in the short run is limited.

Let me add that in all efforts at poverty eradication, special care has to be taken to meet the needs of women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups. In India, the empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups has been woven into our development effort.

Crucial to the global effort are the problems of the youth of the world, which have rarely been addressed. We believe that youth employment must be a priority for all of us. As for today's children, it is necessary to build their capabilities and to make them more employable as tomorrow's workforce. This calls for greater investment in education and health and qualitative improvements to make the delivery system more efficient and cost-effective.

I would also like to stress the effectiveness of participatory approaches to development. Central to our success is the perennial problem of resources. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April, estimated that an additional $8 billion would be needed per year only to meet the target of universal primary education, one of the agreed objectives of Commitment 6. On health, the figures put out by the World Health Organization are truly revealing. Of the $60 billion spent each year on health research, only 10 per cent is devoted to the health problems endemic in the developing countries. WHO estimated last year that

malaria alone had an economic cost to Africa equivalent to 1 per cent of the continent's gross domestic product. Tuberculosis is making a comeback. The economic and social costs of HIV/AIDS, 95 per cent of whose victims are in the developing world, have not yet been accurately assessed, but will be even steeper.

The shortfall in resources simply to meet these two basic, essential social goals — universal primary education and basic health care — is huge and clearly beyond the capacity of the developing countries to meet. It shows why official development assistance has a critical role to play in social development, in which the private sector rarely invests. This is why it is disturbing that the levels of official development assistance continue to fall. As the World Bank has noted, though the fiscal problems given as the reason for the drop in official development assistance have eased, with fiscal deficits in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries declining from 4.3 per cent of gross domestic product in 1993 to 1.3 per cent in 1997, official development assistance also fell by 14 per cent in this period. The developed world has to recognize that a reversal of this trend is essential to meet the ambitious goals set out at the Copenhagen Summit.

It bears underlining that the progress of Africa will be the key to the success of the developing world.

International cooperation is also essential to defeat the forces of the global "uncivil society". Terrorism, transnational crime, drug-trafficking and xenophobia undermine social development and social values; drawing up international strategies to defeat them must be a priority for all of us.

As the World Bank has also pointed out, the well-being of the poor depends increasingly on forces originating outside country borders. The impact of globalization is, of course, so well documented that it needs no further illustration. What is of central concern to the poor of the world is that the spin-offs from globalization must translate into social benefits for the 1.2 billion marginalized people. India would favour any move to channel as much as possible of the gains of globalization into time-bound poverty eradication initiatives.

In 1992, the *Human Development Report* estimated that if the industrialized countries followed less restrictive trade policies, the developing world would earn in trade 10 times what it receives as official development assistance. Resources mean a greater flow not only of funds in the form of aid, external assistance and foreign direct investment, but also of knowledge and technology. These various forms of support have to be organized on an international scale and in a manner which makes them accessible to the poor. In today's global village, peace and sustainable development will ultimately rest on our sensitivity to each other's concerns.

Let this session be remembered for making a firm commitment to pool all global resources to eradicate poverty, which, despite all our efforts, continues to afflict a large number of people across the globe.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services of the United States of America.

Ms. Shalala (United States of America): If Shakespeare had joined us five years ago in Copenhagen, he might have said this about Hamlet's homeland: "Something is extraordinary in the State of Denmark".

What was extraordinary? The World Summit for Social Development and the Declaration and Programme of Action that were adopted at the Summit's conclusion.

At Copenhagen, we opened our eyes to a world struggling and poor. Both the developed and developing world saw poverty in the midst of plenty, joblessness in the midst of an economic boom and discrimination and gender inequality in the midst of new-found freedom.

Vice-President Gore summed up this challenge when he noted, five years ago in Copenhagen, "Economic growth cannot be sustained unless its fruits are continually invested in nourishing human potential". That is exactly why we are here: to see how far we have come in nourishing human potential around the world, and how far we still must go.

Five years after Copenhagen, poverty, lack of education, infectious diseases, violence against women, unemployment and debt still grip much of the world. But in the United States, as in other countries represented here, we are committed to eradicating poverty, promoting full employment and building a society where every voice is welcome and every opportunity is shared.

We are committed to working with all our international partners to foster international economic growth, social integration and public health around the globe. We are committed to a philosophy of social and economic development that views the poor not as passive recipients of aid but as decision-makers in control of their own future.

Earlier this month at the Beijing+5 conference in New York, we said that, in the face of the very real challenges and opportunities of globalization, we are committed to helping women live lives of equality, dignity and prosperity. Women are half of humanity, but we will not settle for half of our rights.

In the United States we are working hard to put our own house in order. For the first time in over two decades our budget is balanced. We are in the midst of the longest economic expansion in our nation's history, which has helped reduce unemployment to a level not seen in 30 years. At the same time, our poverty rates are the lowest they have been in two decades. Still, we have much work to do. The United States must enforce laws against racial and sexual discrimination, expand our own health-care system, support worker training, invest in our own most impoverished regions and improve education.

As for social integration, our Declaration of Independence espouses one simple belief: that all men and women are created equal. Yet for years my country denied fundamental rights to women and passed laws discriminating against African Americans. We no longer live with these terrible laws. But we do live with their consequences. I am talking about poverty, unequal education, employment discrimination and gaps in health outcomes. African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians generally suffer disproportionately high rates of cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. That is why in 1998 our President set a goal of eliminating major racial and ethnic health disparities.

From micro-loans in Bangladesh and AIDS prevention in Uganda, to emerging democracy and economic stability in Eastern Europe, together we have made great progress towards human rights and social development. Nevertheless, we believe that we have five challenges to meet in order to reach the goals that we set five years ago in Copenhagen. These challenges are critical steps that will help to end poverty and promote full employment and social integration.

First, liberty is the soil of sustainable development. There can be no end to poverty without political rights, free expression and a civil society. Secondly, women must be given full equality, at home, in education and in the workplace so that their talents, energy and passion can be an engine for social development. As President Clinton said recently in India, "When women have access to knowledge, health, economic opportunity and civil rights, children thrive, families succeed and countries prosper".

Thirdly, we must expand access to health care for everyone, teach prevention and stop the worldwide pandemic of infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We must finish our worldwide effort to eliminate polio, and we must stop the marketing of tobacco to children.

Fourthly, the time has come to ensure that the benefits of development and globalization are broadly shared around the globe. That means advocating for full employment, higher living standards, equal treatment of women in the workplace and the end of abusive child labour. This requires that we do all we can to respect, promote and realize fundamental workers' rights, protect the environment and build a social safety net that protects our most vulnerable citizens — the young, the old and the disabled — as well as workers who have lost their jobs.

Fifth, in order to achieve positive change, we must continue to work together. The days of government dictating solutions are over. Today, we know that some of the best answers come through partnerships among non-governmental organizations, the private sector, government and local communities. We must also listen directly to our people, particularly the poorest among us, for their ideas and solutions.

Hamlet said, "the readiness is all". We, too, must be ready to roll up our sleeves, link arms and finish the great task we began five short years ago in Copenhagen.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mario Palma-Rojo, Vice-Minister for Regional Development of Mexico.

Mr. Palma-Rojo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Copenhagen 1995 was a historic forum where, by consensus, we established the first goals and policies that would become points of reference for social issues at the global level. It was at Copenhagen where social

development was first included as a priority on the international agenda.

The political will and conviction expressed five years ago to focus the world's efforts on the fight against poverty and social exclusion are still present and continue to be a priority and a source of legitimate expectations for the inhabitants of our countries.

Thus, today Mexico reaffirms the commitments undertaken at the Summit, which are consistent with the historical and legitimate struggle of Mexicans for freedom, sovereignty, social justice and democracy, reports on the progress made and joins in the invitation to increase the scope of social policy in an effort to face with greater chances of success the complex problems of poverty, marginalization and social inequality.

In the social and political arena, Mexico is experiencing unprecedented democratic progress today. We have electoral bodies headed by citizens, and we have undertaken the most profound and transcendental democratic reform of our entire history.

Over these five years, President Zedillo's Administration has authorized priority action in the social domain, as it recognizes that only through the eradication of poverty will the demands of Mexican social justice will be met. Thus, it has allocated increasing amounts of the budget to meet the outstanding needs of the poorest members of the population.

In this regard, in the past five years the federal budget allocated to social development has shown an annual average growth of 7 per cent in real terms, and this year the figure is $50 billion; that is 61 per cent of the amount budgeted, an amount never before reached in Mexico.

All this has been attained in a context of stability, sound public finances, low inflation and an average annual eco .omic growth of 5 per cent in the last four years. N.vertheless, we are aware that although budgetary allocations are vital, other factors are required in order for social policy to be effectively translated into concrete actions, into tangible, everyday well-being for the people.

These factors include the comprehensiveness and relevance of actions, the convergence of the various levels of Government, the decentralization of actions, the assessment of policies, transparency in the use of resources and, particularly, the participation of civil society.

Comprehensive programmes are required, through which social rights are guaranteed to all individuals. However, we must also have programmes focused on the neediest groups in an effort to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

In Mexico we have managed to take health-care services to 98 per cent of the population, and educational services have increased significantly at all levels, particularly primary education, which includes 98 per cent of children.

Regarding specific actions to reduce poverty, in Mexico we are carrying out many programmes that reach the most underprivileged, directly or indirectly, including more than 40 million people. In less than three years, we have developed a programme for health, education and nutrition, called Progresa, targeting families in extreme poverty. This programme provides assistance to 2.6 million families, that is 14 million persons. Its scope of action is broad. It includes monetary assistance in the form of scholarships for boys and girls to attend school, giving priority to girls; and providing food to the youngest children and to pregnant and lactating women. Additionally, it provides health-care services to families as a whole and monetary assistance for purchasing food products.

This programme, in the brief period it has been in existence, is already having a significant impact on the improvement of the nutrition and school attendance rates of beneficiaries. In secondary education, for example, there has been an increase in school enrolment of 26 per cent for boys and 38 per cent for girls in only two years.

Furthermore, resources are delivered directly to the mothers. Progresa provides significant support to the female gender as part of the comprehensive actions of the Government to give priority to women in all programmes.

We have learned that, although actions that provide social services are indispensable, they are insufficient. We know that social programmes will not resolve the poverty problem unless they are accompanied by actions that strengthen productive capacity and generate paid and permanent jobs.

Thus, we are promoting productive programmes of all sorts, providing small loans to encourage self-

employment or to establish social enterprises or small businesses, as well as to generate jobs, through small, medium-sized and large enterprises, that offer the possibility of living with dignity, opening new horizons to individuals and their families.

In regard to the commitments made by the Government of Mexico five years ago, it is important to note that the average life expectancy of Mexicans is currently 75 years, which is 15 years longer than the agreed target. In 1998, Mexico recorded a mortality rate of 28 per thousand for children under 5 years of age, which is 17 points below the goal of 45 per thousand established at the Summit. In regard to children under one year of age, by 1998 the mortality rate had dropped to 24 per thousand which is 11 points below the goal of 35 per thousand established at the Summit.

There is total vaccination coverage, and in relation to education, practically all Mexican boys and girls now have free access to basic education. In terms of employment, from 1995 to 1999, the urban open unemployment rate dropped significantly from 6.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent of the economically active population. In five years we increased the number of employed in the formal sector of the economy by 6 million.

The main goals established at the World Summit five years ago have been met through the joint actions of Government and society. Nevertheless, our concerns and commitment remain with those who are not included in the statistics for each goal, which ultimately express only averages. We are aware of the need for sustained efforts in order to resolve the multiple facets of poverty and marginalization still pending. Accomplishing this aim is the main challenge we face as a nation at the beginning of this century.

Once again, it is the historical responsibility of this forum not only to establish the common goals of humanity in terms of social development, but also to lead the efforts on which we agree here.

The Government of Mexico reiterates its commitment to the noble purposes that guided the World Summit for Social Development, in the conviction that it is a historic landmark in peoples' efforts to bring closer the day when we fulfil our shared desire to see poverty disappear from our countries and from the face of the Earth.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Hans Heinemann, Chairman of the delegation of the Netherlands.

Mr. Heinemann (Netherlands): The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was more than a meeting of hope. It was also an expression of our will to act; a decisive step to tackle the chronic worldwide problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The special sessions of the General Assembly are meetings of accountability and an important opportunity for taking new initiatives. We succeeded in taking a step forward for the women of the world during the Beijing process. We now have to do the same for social development. We ask ourselves, "What did we achieve, and what are the tasks for the near future?"

First, what did we achieve? For the Netherlands, the Social Summit was an acknowledgement of the fact that prosperity and poverty also exist side by side even in a wealthy country like ours. It was the end of the complacency and the start of a comprehensive programme for work and income.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly shows that progress has been made since Copenhagen. Worldwide there is more attention paid to fighting poverty. Worldwide there is more attention paid to developing social policy. There is a growing consciousness that economic progress should not be made at the expense of people. Social development and economic performance are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing. There is a growing awareness that decent work is an essential link to a decent existence. Our insights have deepened. Our way of thinking has changed. Measures have been taken. But we are only at the beginning.

Five years is a short span of time for Governments and organizations to fully implement Copenhagen. But five years is a long span of time — too long a span — for the people we have to reach. We will have to boost our performance in order to ameliorate the daily lives of people; and time is not on our side, because since Copenhagen there are more poor people. There is an increasing number of the so-called working poor. Poverty in urban areas is an increasing problem. The ageing of societies has continued at a rapid pace. The disparities between and within countries are growing. Employment opportunities in developing countries have grown, but

opportunities have grown most of all in the informal, low-paid and unprotected sectors.

This special session can make a difference. So what are the tasks for the future? I shall point out four areas that require better performance. The first area is work, health and education. What we urgently need are strategies geared towards full employment. We need more and better jobs to enable the millions of unemployed people to work to escape poverty. We have to work on strategies that allow economic and social policy to be mutually reinforcing. We have to start developing policies to achieve economic growth in favour of the poor. The awareness that social policy can be a productive factor makes a world of difference.

Expenditures for social policy are not just costs that have to be minimized. Social policy is of vital importance for economic performance, the sustainability of social safety nets and the participation of people. The Netherlands is now restructuring its social security system to make sure that it is a springboard, not a trap.

For a sustainable future we must ensure decent work for all. Together with its European Union partners, the Netherlands stresses the importance of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on fundamental labour standards. We call for the universal ratification and full implementation of the ILO core conventions, including, and in particular, the Convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In a world economy in which globalization and liberalization are leading principles, fundamental labour standards form a necessary counter-balance. In this conference we must ensure that the international rules of the game are fair and just.

Health, education, work and a better life are inextricably connected to one another. Therefore, we have to realize access for all to basic social services such as health services and education. Knowledge is a key to economic and social progress. Our goal must be that we do not rest until all children are given a chance to go to school so that we do not have to worry about child labour.

The second point is about the social responsibility of the private sector. In order to make our commitments operational, we need the help of the private sector. This is an appeal to the private sector to join in and to consider the well-being of people as part of their core business, as do the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the ILO. Act globally and work locally, with dignity and care. That, too, is a benchmark for success. In a world in which mutual economic dependency is growing, it is both a moral and a rational choice.

Thirdly, good governance is a prerequisite for social development. The rule of law, effective State institutions, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, respect for human rights and the participation of all citizens in the decisions that affect their lives are essential elements. The report of the Secretary-General for the Millennium Summit is very clear on this issue. We should follow his example and clearly state our commitment to good governance. Good governance is the only way to win and preserve the trust of citizens. It is not an easy way to go, but it is the only way. This applies both to relations within a country and to relations between countries. Good governance concerns all levels of public administration, but it also includes good corporate governance.

The Netherlands deeply regrets that official development assistance is still far below the internationally agreed targets. This is incompatible with the comprehensive and complex international development agenda. We call upon all Governments to stand by the agreement for official development assistance.

My fourth and last point is the necessity for cooperation and the preparedness to listen. Five years after the Copenhagen Summit, we are more convinced than ever that cooperation is absolutely necessary nationally and internationally, not only because two know more than one, but because two can also do more than one. The Netherlands strongly believes in donor coordination and ownership. Debt alleviation is a key in the development agenda of highly indebted poor countries. This should be based on a poverty reduction strategy developed by the countries themselves. It is striking proof of the need for cooperation between all relevant factors, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations. We strongly support the work of the World Bank and the IMF in promoting the poverty reduction strategy papers. We now have to act in order to turn this acknowledgement and willingness into practical results that improve the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people. The fight against poverty, decent work for all and social integration is a common aim of all actors gathered here at Geneva.

Governments, parliaments, social organizations, churches, the private sector, municipalities and, last but not least, the people themselves have to work together to achieve this goal. Only open communication and cooperation can ensure that all people reap the benefits of economic growth and globalization.

As a final remark, let me quote the representative of our youth delegation, who said,

> "The decisions you are taking are about our futures. We want to join in and contribute our share."

She is right. We have a major responsibility towards future generations.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.